

# The Last Adam Victorious

Luke 4:1-13

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## Introduction

Well, it is the second Sunday of Advent—a time that we often set aside to remember the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ—to celebrate Christmas, in the truest sense. And of course, the challenge with that is always to battle the familiarity. Between the tinsel, and the ornaments, and the gingerbread cookies, and the familiar carols, we can all be tempted to domesticate Christmas, and cease to marvel in worship at what God has accomplished.

And that's true even with the Christmas story. Let me ask you this: When you think about telling the Christmas story, where do you think about starting? The baby in the manger? Caesar's census? Herod's decree? The magi and the star in the east? The angel's visit to Mary? To Joseph? To Zacharias?

I'd like to suggest to you that the Christmas story doesn't start at any of those points. The story of Christmas actually starts with the creation of the world. And in our time together this morning, I'd like to tell the Christmas story, from the beginning, maybe in a way it's not often told. But I hope it will serve to deepen your appreciation for Christmas, and deepen your worship for the Christ of Christmas.

## Adam Fails His Test

And that story starts with God Himself. Out of the infinite fullness of His own perfection, God desired to communicate His glory to His creatures. And so He created the heavens and the earth and all they contain. Light, and water, and the sky, and the land, and trees, and plants, the sun, moon, and stars, beasts, and birds, and fish, and every kind of animal. He spoke the universe into existence in six days. And on the sixth day of creation came God's *magnum opus*. On the sixth day, He created mankind in His own image, male and female, to the end that they might know, enjoy, and worship Him, and make Him known throughout the earth.

And there in the Garden, humanity lived in perfect, unbroken fellowship with their Creator. And God's faithful, loving provision was unmistakable. Turn to Genesis 1. Adam and Eve lacked nothing in Eden.

In Genesis 1:29, God says to man, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food.” Flip over to Genesis 2:9, where the text says that every tree that grew in the garden was “*pleasing to the sight and good for food.*” Verse 10 says that four rivers flowed through the garden to water it, furnishing life to this fertile paradise. Verses 11 and 12 speak about how the land was rich with precious stones—gold and bdellium and onyx. In verse 15, God puts man in this garden, to cultivate it and keep it. What a job! Just keep Paradise pleasant! And then in verse 16, God invites them to feast on the dainties of the garden! Look at the verse: “From every tree of the garden you may eat freely.” Adam and Eve are standing in a perfect world, with unhindered fellowship with God, still free from the bonds of a sinful nature. How abundant—how superabundant—is God’s goodness to His creatures!

And that goodness is not at odds with the exercise of His lordship. Because in verse 17, He gives them one prohibition. He was the Creator; He was their Lord. And so along with all this profuse blessing, God rightfully exercises His lordship over man by reserving from them the fruit of one tree in the garden. Verse 17: “From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” They could eat from every tree, just not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan saw this as his opportunity. And so in he slithers, Genesis 3:1, and says to Eve, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” Here’s Satan’s battle plan: he’s going to paint God as this narrow-hearted, tight-fisted, prohibitive killjoy. “Has God put you in this lush garden and forbidden you to enjoy the fruit of its trees?” And the answer, of course, is no. And Eve had at least gotten *that* right. She says, verse 2, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.” “God *hasn’t* put us in this garden only to tell us that we can’t enjoy it. Just the opposite! We can eat from *any* tree in the garden, except this *one*,” verse 3. “If we eat of it, we’ll die.”

And Satan replies in verse 4, “You surely will not die!” “No way is that going to happen! You know what’s going on here, Eve?” Verse 5: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” “God knows that when you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you’ll know good and evil. You’ll be like God! And He doesn’t want that kind of competition! He wants to keep the blessing of knowing good and evil all to Himself!”

See the strategy? “God is stingy! Miserly! Tight-fisted! There’s no satisfaction in obedience! He’s hogging the best blessings to Himself!” And Eve, standing in paradise, with no lack of anything, began to question the generosity of the God who had given her all good things to enjoy. She began to suspect this God, who blesses so lavishly, of parsimoniousness, of narrow-heartedness.

And look at verse 6: “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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” And I wonder if you can hear, in those three temptations, something of the three categories of sin that the Apostle John speaks of in 1 John 2:16. In that text, John says, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” Those are the categories of sin that John says characterize the world system. Can you hear them in Genesis 3:6? “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was a delight to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and that the tree was desirable to make one wise [the pride of life].” And I want you to hold on to that observation, because we’re going to come back to it later.

And so Eve ate from the tree. And she gave the fruit to Adam as well, and he ate. And though their physical lives on Earth continued for centuries after that, at that moment, just as God had promised, they died, spiritually. That one act of disobedience catapulted all of humanity into damnation. As Romans 5:12 says, “sin entered the world through the one man.” And because Adam was our representative, all of humanity sinned *in* him. In a mysterious but nevertheless real way, all of humanity—even all of you, and me—all of us were united to Adam in his disobedience, in such a way that when he sinned, we sinned. And into God’s blessed, very-good creation, spread the cancer of sin and death.

Fellowship with God was broken. Sin separated humanity from a holy God, and destroyed our ability to fulfill the purpose for which we were created—namely to worship God. And there’s nothing we can do about it. Nothing we can do can adequately pay for the offense caused to a holy God. None of us can escape the death that we inherit through our father Adam.

But just as immediately as Adam and Eve sin against God and fail in their commission to glorify Him by ruling over creation in righteousness—just as immediately—God devised a magnificent plan. It was a plan of salvation that made the angels, who had not long ago witnessed the world created with a word, marvel in amazement. In Genesis 3:15, God promises that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. God the Father will send His only Son—God Himself—to be born as a helpless baby, and to grow into a man who will destroy the work of the devil, who will undo the damage of man’s curse into sin.

He will be the eternal Word become flesh, come to dwell among us, John 1:14. He will live on the earth as fully man and fully God. Being man, He would be subject to all the weaknesses and temptations of a son of Adam. In the language of Hebrews 2:17, He would be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Yet being God, He would be unstained by the depravity of

Adam, and, according to Hebrews 7:26, would be a high priest who was holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sinners. As the Son of God, this Seed of the woman would be, as 1 Corinthians 15:45 calls Him, the last Adam. Romans 5:14 says that Adam was a type of the Messiah who was to come.

Just as Adam represented all humanity, and by his sin spread death and condemnation to all those who were in him, so this Promised Savior would represent humanity, and by His obedience would minister life and justification to all those who are in Him. He would come, and work righteousness in obedience to God, pay for sins, and be the progenitor of a new redeemed humanity that would finally be restored to worship God in spirit and truth.

### **The Coming Seed**

And so for years, and decades, and centuries, and even millennia, God's people anticipated this divine Savior. The story of the whole Old Testament, becomes the story of answering the question: "Who is this **seed** who will crush the head of the serpent? Who is the one who will redeem man and restore him to God?"

Eve thought it might have been her son, Abel, because Genesis 4:4 tells us that "the Lord had regard for Abel." But you know the story of Cain and Abel, that Abel's brother Cain killed him right away (Gen 4:8)—a picture-perfect illustration of how far the human race had fallen from their relationship with God in the garden, in just a short time. Some years later, Eve bore her son Seth, and she believed that he might be the promised seed. When Seth was born, Eve said in Genesis 4:25, "God has appointed me another offspring—which is the same Hebrew word that is translated *seed* in Genesis 3:15—in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." But we quickly learn that Seth wasn't that promised seed.

Fast forward to the time of Noah in the next chapter, and we learn that Noah's father, Lamech, thought that Noah might be the seed. In Genesis 5:29 he said, "*This one* will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed." "Noah will reverse the curse!" But, of course, saving the world was the one thing that Noah couldn't do, because, as Genesis 6:5 tells us, every intent of the thought of man's heart was only evil continually. Far from saving the world, Noah saw God destroy the world by means of the flood.

Then, in Genesis 12, God enters into covenant with Abraham and promises to make "a great nation" (12:2) from Abraham's "descendants," Genesis 12:7. And that word, "descendants," is again that same Hebrew word for *seed*. And God promises that He is going to bless the entire world by means of that seed (12:3). And so the seed of the woman is now narrowed down to the

seed of Abraham. The seed will come from this particular nation that God would make out of Abraham's descendants.

And that nation, of course, is the nation of Israel, whom God delivers from slavery in Egypt, and enters into covenant with them at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19. And Israel is quick to affirm their intended obedience. They hear all the words of the covenant that God spoke to them, and in Exodus 24:3 they say, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" But Moses could barely get down the mountain before the people had fallen into idolatry. Though God had just commanded them, in Second Commandment, not to worship any idol or graven image, Exodus 32 tells us that they made a golden calf, called it their god, and worshiped it for redeeming them from Egypt.

And that incident sets the stage for the showcasing of Israel's unfaithfulness to God's covenant throughout the rest of the Old Testament. As soon as they enter the Promised Land of Canaan, Judges chapter 1 tells us that they disobey God's commandment to fully drive out the pagan nations there. Rather than maintaining the pure worship of Yahweh, they fall into the syncretism and idolatry of the nations. And so the repeating story of the book of Judges is of (a) Israel's falling into sin, (b) being oppressed by the nations as God's chastening, (c) crying out to God for deliverance, and (d) His sending a deliverer who would give them rest from their enemies. But this happens over and over again. They enjoy peace for a little while, and in that peace they forget God, and so it's not long before they are immersed in another conflict.

And so the people begin to wonder: "When will Yahweh send a judge who will finally deliver us from our enemies?" That's why there's that refrain in the book of Judges. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." When would a righteous king come, deliver Israel from her enemies, and establish moral purity among God's people?

Well, as a result, Israel demands a king to rule over them. And after God judges them by giving them Saul, it's not long after that He is gracious and raises up David, and enters into covenant with him. In 2 Samuel 7, starting in verse 12, God says to David, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." And so God promises that one of David's descendants—again, one of his *seed*—will reign on the throne of Israel forever and establish an everlasting kingdom. The seed of the *woman* will be the seed of *Abraham*, who will be of the nation of *Israel*, who will be the Son of *David*.

But who would that king be? It would not be David; he was a murderer and an adulterer. It wouldn't be Solomon; he was a multiplier of wives, whose heart was turned away after foreign gods. And when we get to the books of the Kings, we find *another* constant refrain: "He did evil

in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin.” That phrase appears in the books of 1 and 2 Kings no less than twenty-seven times.

And this cycle of wickedness continues literally for centuries, until God finally delivers His wayward nation into exile. And yet, He sends Jeremiah and Ezekiel to prophesy of a coming New Covenant, by which God would restore Israel to their land, and put His law in their hearts, so that they would be careful to walk in His statutes! He promises to forgive their sins, and put His Spirit within them, so that they would become obedient from the heart. God promises to bring salvation to His people through the New Covenant.

The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the faithful Israelite, the Son of David, would accomplish salvation by instituting *this* New Covenant. And the people wait! And they pray! And they look! And they wonder! “Who’s it going to be?” Peter says in 1 Peter 1:10 that the prophets “made careful searches and inquiries,” trying to discern who this Messiah would be and when He would come.

### **The Testimonies of Luke**

And after centuries of waiting for this Savior—after all this anticipation—the Gospel of Luke begins with His story. Turn to Luke chapter 1. Luke makes his purpose for writing very clear from the very beginning. In the opening four verses he explains to his reader, a well-known Roman dignitary nicknamed Theophilus, that he wanted him to know the exact truth about the Christ that he believed in. Luke wanted Theophilus to know that when he held the pages of his Gospel, that he held in his hands a faithful account of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and that *He* was the long-awaited Savior of the world that God had promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15.

And so what you have, in the entirety of the first three chapters of Luke’s Gospel, is testimony upon testimony—affirmation upon affirmation—that this Jesus is the promised Seed! Look at it with me. In chapter 1 we have the account of not one, but two miraculous births—both of the Messiah Jesus and his forerunner, John. And both of these births are announced by angels! An angel miraculously appeared to an old priest named Zacharias, and told him, chapter 1 verse 13, that he and his wife Elizabeth, who was barren, were going to have a son named John! And that John, verse 17, would be the forerunner who would prepare the way for the Lord! And then the angel Gabriel appeared to a young virgin named Mary, and told her, chapter 1 verse 31, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” Double angelic testimony that *this* is the time of the long-awaited Messiah!

And then, not only is Jesus proclaimed as the fulfillment of messianic prophecy, but in Luke chapter 1, Zacharias and Mary declare that in the person of this baby Jesus, God is now fulfilling all the covenant promises that He made throughout the thousands of years of history of the Old Testament! In Luke 1:54–55, Mary declares that God “has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to *Abraham* and his descendants forever.” In verses 69 to 73, Zacharias proclaims that God “has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of *David* His servant— as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—[...] to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to *Abraham* our father....” Back in verses 32 and 33, the angel declares to Mary that her child “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father *David*; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end,” exactly as God had promised to David one-thousand years earlier.

This Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants! He is the Son of Mary—fully God, but also fully man—and therefore could properly be called the seed of the woman. He is the Seed of Abraham, a descendant from Abraham’s line. He is of the nation of Israel, the perfect embodiment of what an Israelite was to be, because He would live a sinless life of obedience to God’s law. And He is the Son of David, the promised King that will reign on David’s throne forever.

And so we have angelic testimony. And then we have the testimony of Zacharias and Mary. Then in chapter 2, we have the testimony of Simeon, a man described as “righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel.” In verse 26, Luke tells us, “It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” And when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus into the temple, Simeon took the baby into his arms and said, verse 29, “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,” and then he quotes the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, “a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” Simeon says, “Lord, *this* is the Messiah whom You promised I would see! He’s here!”

And then there was the prophetess Anna, that devout woman who never left the temple of the Lord. When she saw the baby Jesus, verse 38 says, “At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” “Everyone! Here, in this Child, is where the redemption of God’s people is to be found!”

Then in chapter 3, we have the testimony of John the Baptist, the forerunner, who, verse 4, was a voice crying in the wilderness to make ready the way of the Lord. “The Messiah who was to come—the promised seed—He has come! This is the One we’ve been waiting for!” In chapter 3

verse 21, we then get the testimony of the Holy Spirit. As John is baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River, verse 22, “the Holy Spirit descended upon [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove”—testifying that this was the Messiah, the Anointed One. And then, in the very next verse, we have the testimony of the Father Himself, who declared, audibly, from heaven, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well-pleased.”

And if all that wasn’t enough, in the next section Luke inserts Jesus’ genealogy. And like Matthew’s genealogy, this one testifies that Jesus is the Son of David, and the seed of Abraham. But unlike Matthew’s genealogy, Luke’s goes all the way back to Adam, which substantiates Jesus’ genuine humanity.

And so as we come to chapter 4, one last passage stands between all that testimony and the commencement of Jesus’ teaching in Galilee. After all that testimony, one last qualification—one last credential—is necessary before Jesus begins His public ministry. Sure, He might have the right angelic entourage, and He might have the miraculous birth, and He might fulfill the right prophecies, and He might have the right lineage. But if He can’t succeed where Adam failed—if He can’t withstand the full onslaught of the temptation of Satan in His own life—if He can’t defeat sin and death and accomplish righteousness as a faithful Son of God—then He’s no *better* than Adam, and the human race has no hope. If the curse is to be broken, if the devil’s works are to be destroyed, if righteousness is to be accomplished and sin is to be atoned for, Jesus must be able to do battle with the ancient serpent and emerge victorious. In Luke 4:1–13, the salvation of the entire human race is at stake.

### **The Anti-Eden**

Let’s look at verse 1. “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.”

Notice that Luke mentions the Holy Spirit twice in this opening sentence. Jesus was both “full of the Holy Spirit”—meaning He was entirely submitted to the Spirit and under His influence—and He was being led by the Spirit in the wilderness. Not only does this link this account closely with His baptism, where the Spirit descended on Him as if a dove, but it also drives the point home that this battle that is about to take place is God’s doing. Satan isn’t throwing some sort of monkey wrench into God’s plan here. Satan is not interrupting Jesus’ mission by tempting Him. He’s actually giving occasion for Jesus to accomplish His mission according to the divine providence of God. In fact, Mark is even more emphatic in his account of this event. He wrote in Mark 1:12 that the Spirit impelled Jesus to go out into the wilderness. Satan is indeed the tempter; the end of that first sentence is crystal clear: He was “being tempted by the devil.” But Luke makes it just as clear that this temptation—this battle—was the outworking of God’s sovereign plan to accomplish righteousness in Jesus Christ.



Luke also mentions that the setting for this battle is 40 days the wilderness. Now, this is significant for a couple of reasons. For one thing, Jesus' testing for 40 days in the wilderness calls to mind the Israelites' testing for 40 *years* of wandering in the wilderness. Similar events in the life of Israel and the life of Jesus show a sort of correspondence or analogy between the nation of Israel and Jesus Christ. Israel's years in the wilderness were marked by failure after failure—faithlessness after faithlessness. How would the Messiah—the One whom God calls, “My Servant, Israel” in Isaiah 49:3—how would He fare in His time of wilderness testing?

But this setting is significant for another reason. Jesus was being tempted in the Judean wilderness, which is described by commentators as the most barren, desolate region in Israel. One commentator put it this way: “If there could be fixed in one's mind the image of the almost-painful sterility of the Sahara or of Death Valley, and then multiply that by a factor of four or more, one might come close to capturing the geographical reality to which [Jesus was] exposed.”

So, while on the one hand this scene emphasizes a connection between the nation of Israel and the embodiment of the faithful Israelite *par excellence* in the Messiah, it also emphasizes the connection between Adam, the first representative of humanity, and Jesus, the second Adam. And that connection is shown by providing a stark contrast between the environment Jesus was in during His trial and the environment that Adam was in during his trial. This wilderness was the **anti-Eden**. Adam had his trial in Paradise; Jesus had His in the most desolate place in Israel. Adam experienced his temptation with every physical need met, with the fruit of every tree of the garden his for the taking. Jesus experienced His temptation without having eaten anything for the past forty days. Adam engaged in his battle with the fellowship of his wife by his side (though, that didn't exactly work to his advantage in this case). Jesus engaged in His battle entirely alone, with no earthly companion to aid Him. The point that Luke is making, here, is that while Adam failed in the best of circumstances, Jesus, the last Adam, triumphed in the most hostile of circumstances.

### **I. To Doubt the Father's Loving Provision (vv. 3–4)**

And then come the temptations. And the first temptation that Satan attacks Jesus with is the temptation **to doubt the Father's loving provision**. Verse 2 says that after fasting for forty days, Jesus became hungry. And Satan sought to capitalize on that. He said, verse 3, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

Now, the word *Son* in the Greek is moved forward in the sentence for emphasis. This is what Satan chooses to focus on, because the thrust of this attack—both here and again in verse 9—is to challenge the Father's declaration in chapter 3 verse 22 that Jesus is His beloved Son. Most

fundamentally, Satan's strategy is to challenge the Word of God. This is, "Indeed, has God said...?" all over again!

Now, I don't think that Satan was trying to get Jesus to doubt that He was the Son of God. Jesus knew who He was. This is Satan's attempt to cause Jesus **to doubt the Father's loving provision for Him**. In effect, he's saying, "OK, Jesus. Let's just say that You *are* the Son of God. Does the Son of God live like *this*? Indeed, has God said, 'You are My beloved Son,' and yet forbidden You to make bread for Yourself when You're hungry? This isn't how a loving Father treats His Son!"

This is exactly what he did with Eve. He tries the lust of the flesh first. "You mean to tell me that your loving God won't let you eat from this tree? Why would God want to keep the blessing of this luscious fruit from you? You won't die! God just wants to keep all the good stuff to Himself! "Jesus, You mean to tell me that You're the Son of God—the One through whom and for whom all these things have been made—and Your Father won't even let You fill Your stomach? Go ahead, use some of that divine power and make some bread for Yourself."

It's not a sin to eat bread when you're hungry. It's not even a sin to *create* bread, because Jesus would do that when He fed the 5,000. And it's not like Satan is tempting Him to show off His divinity: they're alone in the wilderness. This is a temptation, by means of the lust of the flesh, for Jesus **to doubt the Father's loving provision** for Him—to think of God as miserly and tight-fisted and stingy, and to exercise His divine authority outside of His submission to His Father.

We know how the first Adam responded. How does the Second Adam respond? Verse 4: "And Jesus answered him, 'It is written.'" He responds with Scripture. He wields the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, Ephesians 6:17—the living and active, sharper-than-any two-edged-sword Word of God! "It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone.'""

He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, which speaks of Israel's trials in the wilderness, especially of their going without food. Luke only includes half the verse here, but Matthew records that Jesus quoted the other half: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Do you see what Jesus does here? Don't miss this. He battles the temptation to seek immediate gratification in sin by acting faith on God's promise of *superior* satisfaction for obedience.

Sure, Jesus is hungry. But you know what He *also* is? *Satisfied*. Because it's the Word of God that truly satisfies the hunger of the soul! And as Jesus would say in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." How could Jesus **doubt the Father's loving provision** when the Father had made an even more necessary, more satisfying **provision** in His Word! Job 23:12 says, "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His

mouth more than my necessary food!” And if that was true of Job, how much more true of the Servant of Yahweh, who said in Isaiah 50 verse 4, The Father “awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”

## II. To Doubt the Father’s Gracious Plan (vv. 5–8)

So Satan moved to his next temptation. He tempted Jesus to **doubt the Father’s gracious plan**. Look at verse 5: “And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’”

I like the way one commentator puts it: “Like a prospective seller, the devil points out the goods. In a place where Jesus has nothing, he is about to be offered everything. . . . ‘Look, Jesus, at what can be yours!’” You can just hear the deception: “Haven’t you lived under the restrictions of humanity long enough already? Aren’t you anxious to leave this wretched state of humiliation? You deserve better! And *I* can give it to you!” This was the lust of the eyes.

And this is sinister. It’s true that Satan is, in a real sense, the ruler of this world. Jesus Himself calls Satan that several times in the Gospel of John: 12:31, 14:30, 16:11. It’s true that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, 1 John 5:19. But it is *not* true that Satan is the rightful sovereign of these kingdoms! It is not true that he gives them to whomever he wishes! They are God’s to give! And God had already promised to give them to Jesus. Psalm 2:8: the Father tells the Son, “Ask of *Me*, and *I* will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”

You say, “Why would Satan offer Jesus what was rightfully His to begin with?” And the answer is: Satan was offering Jesus a way to take possession of His reward without going through the suffering and humiliation for which the Father had promised to reward Him. He could have absolute dominion over all the glorious kingdoms of the inhabited earth right now! No need for self-denial! No need for dealing patiently with sinners who would mock Him and spit on Him and hand Him over to be tortured! No need for suffering shame! And *certainly* no need for the cross! Satan was tempting Jesus **to doubt the Father’s gracious plan**—to seize power and authority on His own, and to renounce the commission the Father had given Him. Satan promised Jesus the crown without the cross.

But what did Jesus say? Verse 8: “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’” You see? This is a matter of worship, and worship belongs to God alone. Satan was tempting Jesus **to doubt the Father’s gracious plan** by means of the lust of the eyes. Back in Genesis 3, Eve didn’t only see that the tree was good for food. She also saw that it was a delight

to the eyes. So also was the glory of the kingdoms of the world a delight to the eyes. But not at the expense of worshiping the God who alone is worthy of worship! Not to the One whose eyes beheld a superior glory! Not the One whose heart cherished a superior delight! There is more joy to be had in the obedient worship of God than in all the glory of all the kingdoms in the world!

Jesus renounces any and all pleasures that would come to Him outside of **the gracious plan of the Father**. And He seeks only those pleasures which come from worshiping Him! And in due time, as Isaiah 53 says, Jesus would see the good pleasure of the Lord and be satisfied (vv. 10–11).

### **III. To Test the Father’s Perfect Protection (vv. 9–12)**

Well, thirdly, then, Satan turns to tempt Jesus **to test the Father’s perfect protection**. Look with me at verses 9–11: “And He led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, “He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,” and, “On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.””

Jesus has responded to Satan’s first two temptations by quoting Scripture, so Satan decides to quote a little Scripture himself. “Ok, so You’re the Son of God, are you? Well Psalm 91:11–12 says that God will protect those who trust in Him. Now, You must trust God if You’re His Son, right? So prove it. Jump off of this temple. If You are who You say You are, the angels will bear You up, and You won’t be dashed to pieces on those rocks down there.” Satan is evil. He twists the Scripture from its context, distorts its meaning, and presents this temptation as if it was the opportunity for Jesus to *fulfill* the Word of God.

The essence of this temptation was for Jesus to prove the truth of God’s promise by putting Him to the test—to back God into a corner such that He would be forced to act. But testing God is not trusting God. Putting God to the test is not faith. It is the definition of the *lack* of faith. “Let me see if this is *really* true. Let me see if God’s Word really *is* reliable.” Pastor John has famously said that this kind of thing isn’t faith; it’s doubt seeking confirmation. And he’s right. The faithful man does not dictate to God how He must keep His promises. That’s actually the height of presumption and arrogance. It is, in fact, “the boastful pride of life.” “When Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that it was *desirable to make one wise...*” “Go ahead. Jump. God will protect you. Don’t you believe the Scriptures?”

How does the last Adam respond? Verse 12: “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” He doesn’t waver. He doesn’t sheath His sword. He goes straight back to Scripture. He battles Scripture wrongly interpreted with Scripture rightly interpreted. Do you realize that aside from the words, “It is written,” and “It is said,” every single word Jesus speaks in this entire

interaction is a quotation from Scripture. What a commentary on how to engage in spiritual warfare!

### Conclusion

And so, verse 13, “When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.” The battle was over. Satan’s quiver of flaming arrows was now empty. He tried the lust of the flesh. Yet Jesus refused to turn the stone to bread. He tried the lust of the eyes, yet Jesus was more enticed by the glory of God than the glory of the world’s kingdoms. He tried the boastful pride of life, but Jesus refused to put God to the test. John Flavel said, “Christ came off a perfect conqueror in the day of His trial. He beat Satan out of the field. For Satan saw what he attempted on Christ was as impossible as to batter the body of the sun with snow-balls.” The last Adam had succeeded precisely where the first Adam had failed.

And, as Romans 5:19 says, just as “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” Jesus has proven that He is qualified to undertake the ministry He will now begin in Galilee.

He is not done. He still has years more of a perfectly obedient life to live in our place to accomplish our righteousness. And the decisive victory would come at the cross—where sin would be paid for, where the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the faithful Israelite, and the Son of David was revealed to be the Mediator of the New Covenant, as He says in Luke 22:20, “This cup which is poured out for you *is the new covenant in My blood.*” The decisive victory would come at the resurrection—where death itself would be put to death by the Author of life. But this crucial victory over Satan in the wilderness ensured that Jesus Christ—the Son of David, the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of the woman, the Second Adam, and the Son of God—was indeed the One promised from of old. *This* is the One who will give us rest from the toil of the ground which the Lord has cursed. *This* is the One who will defeat sin and render powerless the devil, who had the power of death. Sin will be forgiven. Righteousness will be accomplished. And the new humanity formed in Jesus Christ will once again live in fellowship with their Creator, and will worship Him in spirit and truth.

This, dear friends, is what Christmas is all about. The entirety of human history—dating back to Adam and Eve—all of history finds its culmination, its climax, and its resolution in that baby in the manger. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose,” the Apostle John says, “to destroy the works of the devil.” And He has done that, my friends, by accomplishing perfect righteousness in His life of obedience, by paying sin’s penalty in His death on the cross, and by conquering sin and death through His resurrection from the dead. And He is coming soon, to banish all evil and unrighteousness from the earth, and to set up His kingdom wherein He will rule in righteousness forever.

As you prepare for the holiday season, tune your hearts to worship Jesus as the Second and Last Adam. Rest in His righteousness alone, and none of your own. Celebrate your Savior. “Hail the Heav’n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of *Righteousness*! ... Mild, He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die, Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth!”