

# MATTHEW'S MESSAGES THROUGH JESUS' INAUGURAL TESTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Writing in 68 CE, 85 CE, and 90 CE respectively, the Authors of the Gospels according to Saints Mark, Matthew, and Luke say that immediately following his baptism and acceptance by Heaven, Jesus experienced a period of testing.

Matthew is the earliest account that presents details of the tests and their outcomes. This Study examines the cultural and lexical contexts of that account to identify the messages that were intended by the Authors and understood by their immediate community.

To achieve this objective, this Study first presents the situations that the authors of Matthew encountered.

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The proper context for interpreting the Bible is not Augustine or any other church father. It is not the Catholic Church. It is not the rabbinic movements of late antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is not the Reformation or the Puritans. It is not evangelicalism in any of its flavors. It is not the modern world at all, or any period of its history.

The proper context for interpreting the Bible is the context of the biblical writers— the context that produced the Bible. Every other context is alien to the biblical writers and, therefore, to the Bible.

Yet there is a pervasive tendency in the believing Church to filter the Bible through creeds, confessions, and denominational preferences.

(Heiser, Michael S., *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, Kindle Locations 198-204. Lexham Press.)

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**MESSAGES FROM MATTHEW**  
**THROUGH THE INAUGURAL TESTS UPON JESUS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Every reader of the New Testament is aware of the account at Matthew Chapter 4. It describes the testing (“temptation”) of Jesus by Satan/Devil, which followed his baptism and heaven’s declaration that he is God’s Son.

This Study seeks to identify the initial messages that were being given through that account of Jesus’ testing. To do this, we need to unshackle our mind from the twenty-first century and transport it back 2000 years to the time when the Gospel was being written. We need to know the situation that confronted those authors.

The nature of dominant Judaism at that time was not identical with today’s Judaism. There were, however, similarities we are familiar with. Then as now, Judaism featured many streams and sects, including: the strict Legalists; those who accepted Tradition; the Messianic claimants; the “Last day” doomsayers. Included among that mix of competing Jews were groups who followed Jesus (Yeshua/Joshua).

The Gospel authors prepared their accounts in that hotbed of competing religious sectarianism within Judaism. To better understand their purpose and hence their messages, we need to undo our twenty-first century understanding and investigate their documents through their experiences. Only then can we begin to recognise the messages they wanted their intended original readers to receive.

### **LOCATING MATTHEW’S ACCOUNT IN THE STREAM OF TIME**

The earliest New Testament documents were prepared by Paul. He died in 64 CE and he did not document Jesus’ life or any of Jesus’ sermons. Paul’s writings, therefore, are not a source for the Testing described in the Gospels.

The earliest canonized Gospel is attributed to a “Mark”. It was likely written during the last year of the Jewish war against Rome (64-70 C.E.).<sup>1</sup>

The subsequent canonised narrative of Jesus’ life and teachings was later known as “The Gospel According to St Matthew” [*Matthew*]. This was written for a community living some 15 years after the carnage wrought upon Jerusalem by the Romans and more than 50 years after Jesus’ ministry. Later, leaders of another Community of Jesus-followers prepared the document now known as “The Gospel According to Saint Luke” [*Luke*].

The Gospel of Matthew suggests that the Jerusalem Temple has been destroyed (see 12.6; 22.7), and thus must date after 70 CE. ... A date for the Gospel of 80– 90 CE seems reasonable. Antioch (in Syria) is a plausible setting.<sup>2</sup>

### **THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS’ INAUGURAL TESTS**

#### **The post-baptism tests of Jesus are recorded at Mark 1:13, Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13**

Mark says that following Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit called out heaven’s divine approval (Mark 1:9-11) which then drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tested. Mark does not provide details of the testing, only saying, “He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:12-13, NRSV).

Matthew expands on Mark’s statement by supplying extra locations, details of the tests, and the conversations between Jesus and Satan. Matthew introduces the name *Devil*. Luke virtually repeats Matthew’s account, although that Gospel amends the sequence of the tests.

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<sup>1</sup> Wray, et al., 115

<sup>2</sup> Levine, *Kindle Locations* 1338-1342; also, White, 312

## Jesus faced *tests* throughout Matthew's Gospel

The *Wilderness Test* story is integrally linked with themes developed throughout *Matthew*, with features of the narrative appearing at places in the Gospel. The narrative is one of several places in Matthew where Jesus is *tested*. Other episodes of “testing” take place at the hands of the religious leaders, the focus of the writers’ concerns. When the religious leaders wished to *test* Jesus, the Gospel uses the same verb<sup>3</sup> that describes the action taken by Devil during the inaugural testing. The verb is used at Matthew 4:1 (*devil*); 4:3 (*tempter*); 16:1 (*Pharisees* and *Sadducees*); 19:3; 22:15-16, 18; 22:35 (*Pharisees*).

### Mark's account of the Testing

And the Spirit immediately drove [Jesus Christ] out into the wilderness.  
He was in the wilderness forty days,  
tempted by Satan;  
and he was with the wild beasts;  
and the angels waited on him.<sup>4</sup>

### Matthew's account of the Testing

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.  
He fasted forty days and forty nights<sup>5</sup>,  
and afterwards he was famished.  
The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”  
But he answered, “It is written,  
‘One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’<sup>6</sup>”

Then the devil took him to the holy city  
and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple  
saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,  
‘He will command his angels concerning you,’  
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot  
against a stone.’<sup>7</sup>”  
Jesus said to him,  
“Again it is written,  
‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’<sup>8</sup>”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain  
and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor;  
and he said to him, “All these I will give you,  
if you will fall down and worship me.”  
Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,  
‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.’<sup>9</sup>”

Then the devil left him,  
and suddenly angels came  
and waited on him.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> France, 101-102; (*peirazō* – tempt”, “test”: πειράζω)

<sup>4</sup> Mark 1:12-13, NRSV

<sup>5</sup> “[Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan”. (Mark 1:13, NRSV). “For forty days [Jesus] was tempted by the devil”. (Luke 4:2, NRSV)

<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 8:3

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 91:11, 12

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 6:16

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 6:13

## Luke's account of the Testing

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,  
'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying 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 protect you,'

and

'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.<sup>11</sup>

## Matthew's and Luke's accounts are unique

Although the Gospels are not eye witness accounts, Matthew and Luke provide details of the temptations and the dialog. The earlier *Gospel of Mark* briefly mentions that Jesus experienced a period of testing in the wilderness. Luke, written later than Matthew, almost repeats Matthew's story. The *Gospel According to Saint John* [John] prepared by the Johannine Community, makes no mention of the episode.

The description in Matthew and Luke is *sui generis* ['in a class by itself, unique']; there is no analogous account in the entire New Testament. ... No such encounter is described anywhere else in the New Testament. ...

The rest of the New Testament contains no passages in which satan speaks to anyone or is ever seen by anyone tempted by satan.<sup>12</sup> In Mark's temptation pericope, the satan is given neither voice nor visible appearance, and in John's gospel there is no wilderness temptation pericope at all.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 4:1-11, NRSV

<sup>11</sup> Luke 4:1-13, NRSV

<sup>12</sup> Burke (2017), 18

<sup>13</sup> Burke (2017), 18

## **THE SECTS THAT MATTERED TO MATTHEW**

### **Jewish sects emerged during the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE**

Commencing in the second century BCE, the latter part of the Second Temple Period witnessed heightened prophetic, eschatological and apocalyptic fervour.

Jewish sects, such as the Essenes and the Pharisees, emerged in the second and first centuries BCE, in part in response to Hasmonean rule [142 to 63 BCE].<sup>14</sup>

In addition to larger more influential groupings, such as the Dead Sea Communities (“Essenes”); Zealots; Herodians; and the like, there was any number of Jewish Messianic claimants, each fostering its cohort of followers.

The picture of Judaism as a monolith or ‘orthodoxy’ or church is belied by the enormous diversity evidenced by the many movements at the time.<sup>15</sup> Before [the Roman destruction of Jerusalem] there was an incredible range of different types of Judaism and Jewish groups: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Gnostics, various forms of revolutionaries, Christ followers like Paul, and others. They disagreed passionately, but [they] were loosely bound together by their varied connections to Jerusalem and its Temple. Afterward, only two main strands of this religious matrix survived: rabbinic Judaism on the one hand and Christianity on the other.<sup>16</sup>

These speculative groupings produced conflicting sects among the Jews, including a range of sects within adherents of Jesus, all of whom were Jews.

Sectarian movements, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls sect generally identified as the Essenes, loom large in both ancient and modern accounts of the tensions that characterized Judean political and social life throughout the late Second Temple period.<sup>17</sup>

### **Scribes**

#### **Little information is available on the Scribes**

One of the complications of trying to understand scribes is the picture of the NT. It seems to make being a scribe into a religious office. There is little evidence in other sources that there was such a thing.<sup>18</sup>

### **Sadducees**

#### **The Sadducees had been part of the nation’s upper echelon**

Sadducees appeared as a discrete group after the Hasmonean revolt in the mid-second century BCE. They were wealthy, connected, and with firm control of business and religion. They were the priests and high priests in charge of the Temple and its sacrifices, with some serving as the High Priest. They held this exalted position until 70 CE. The Sadducees perished along with the Temple and they disappeared from history.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Most available sources are hostile to the Sadducees**

The information [about Sadducees] is meagre, and most sources are hostile. This means that any historical reconstruction must be considered very uncertain.<sup>20</sup> No extant text can be attributed to a Sadducean author with certainty. ... No source

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<sup>14</sup> Baskin, 221

<sup>15</sup> Grabbe, 129

<sup>16</sup> Carr, 195-196

<sup>17</sup> Baskin, 590

<sup>18</sup> Grabbe, 51

<sup>19</sup> Paragraph compiles materials from: Baskin, 531; Grabbe, 57; Wilson, 31, 32, 34;

<sup>20</sup> Grabbe, 57-58; see also: Baskin, 531



presents them favorably; in Josephus and rabbinic literature they are contrasted unfavorably with the popular Pharisees.<sup>21</sup>

## Pharisees

### **The Pharisees were the scholars and the teachers**

The Pharisees were the faculty of ancient Judaism. They functioned as scholars and teachers, focusing on teaching people Jewish law. For them, *education* constituted the most effective bulwark against Hellenization. ... They were teachers of Torah, a position that required a two year training program. Thus they taught biblical texts, explained them, and encouraged people to observe the commandments.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Pharisees were highly popular teachers.**

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is depicted as denouncing the Pharisees for hypocrisy. This may represent an unfair portrait, however, for they were highly popular teachers and their scholars attracted huge crowds.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Pharisees were more balanced than the Gospels suggest**

Pharisees (ca. mid-second century BCE-70 CE) were one of the Jewish groups to emerge in Judea after the Maccabean revolt. Although popularly known from hostile New Testament accounts as punctilious and legalistic Jews, a more balanced portrait of Pharisees as scholars, teachers, and community leaders emerges from other sources.<sup>24</sup>

The Pharisees are most familiar from the pages of the Gospels. ... Much of the time they, along with the other groups, are simply a foil for Jesus – a chance for him to score points at their expense and give clever replies to leading questions. ...

When we put all the passages together, the following characteristics emerge from the NT writings:

[1] The [Pharisees] have ‘traditions from the fathers/elders’ which are not part of the written law. ...

[2] They are especially concerned with the legal minutiae of obedience ...

[3] Some passages have them also being concerned about how to recognize the Messiah and about Roman authority.<sup>25</sup>

Notably, [Pharisees] play no role in the trial of Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

## Rabbinic Judaism

### **Rabbinic Judaism, and hence modern Judaism, evolved from the Pharisees**

Following the Temple's destruction, the Pharisees were enabled to gain dominance, and they evolved into the highly influential Rabbinic Movement.

The Pharisees survived the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. .... They assumed the leadership role in reconstructing Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. ... It is through the insights of these sages that we get Rabbinic Judaism, and, hence, modern Judaism.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Baskin, 531

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, 34, 35

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, 34

<sup>24</sup> Baskin, 473

<sup>25</sup> Grabbe, 52

<sup>26</sup> Baskin, 473

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, 38; see also: Baskin, 337, 473; Carr, 201-203;

Judaism in virtually all of its present-day forms has its origins in rabbinic Judaism (ca. 50-600 CE).<sup>28</sup> Judaism as invented by the Rabbis represented a new and enduring development in the life of the Jewish people.<sup>29</sup>

### Followers of Jesus formed sects within Judaism

During the latter decades of the Second Temple Period, the followers of Jesus formed sects within Judaism. A Torah-observant group, the Jesus movement initially consisted of Jews who believed that Jesus was the messiah foretold in the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>30</sup>

Peter, James, and John. Paul and his missionary companion, Barnabas. All of these men were Jews, though we identify them with “the origins of Christianity.” This is because we know that their efforts would eventually lead to the formation of that later — and predominantly gentile — religious community. But they did not know this.<sup>31</sup> Scholars have increasingly understood the Jesus movement as one among many apocalyptic and messianic movements in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>32</sup>

Faith in Jesus was thoroughly Jewish and the church began with a large Jewish contingent, in fact, with the remnant of Israel. This remnant was drawn from all segments of the Jewish population.<sup>33</sup>

Much of the most compelling evidence for the Jewishness of the early Jesus communities comes from the Gospels. They and the letters of Paul are part of the religion of Israel in the first century C.E.<sup>34</sup>

- **Torah-observing followers of Jesus** [Jesus-Jews]. These were initially centred in and around Jerusalem until its destruction. Because the Ebionites held similar views, many believe these were one outcome of the Torah-observing Jewish followers of Jesus.
- **High Christology followers of Jesus** [Johannine Jews]. These were ostracised from the synagogue because of their High Christology. They provide their views and experiences through the document now known as *The Gospel According to Saint John*.
- **Gentile-accommodating Pauline “Christians”** [Christian Jews]. These were based at Antioch, with the New Testament Paul/Saul being its most prominent promoter. He employed the title “Christ”, which literally means *Anointed One*, as a name.
- **Spiritualising followers of Jesus**. These are now known as Gnostics. They attracted a far larger following during the early centuries but the Paulines destroyed many of their writings, although not all. I fully suspect, but have no evidence, that they were responsible for the other-worldly genres of *The Epistle to the Colossians* and *The Epistle to the Ephesians*.
- **Eschatologists**. Each of the above followers was certain that the Coming of the Lord Jesus was imminent.<sup>35</sup>

### Locating the *Matthew* sect

I suspect we should locate the authors of Matthew physically close to the Torah-observant Jews and in strong competitions with them. The authors of Matthew and their Jesus are very Torah-tolerant and extremely Torah-promoting. They argue against Tradition, which was the *forte* of the Pharisees..

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<sup>28</sup> Baskin, 337

<sup>29</sup> Baskin, 337

<sup>30</sup> Refer to: Baskin, 103, 104, 105; Dunn, 569-570; Wilson, 95

<sup>31</sup> Fredriksen, 1

<sup>32</sup> Baskin, 103-104

<sup>33</sup> Evans, Kindle locations 4718-4719

<sup>34</sup> Refer to: Boyarin, xiii, 22

<sup>35</sup> The word “apocalypse” simply means “revealing”, which can be applied to any revelation pertaining to the divine, not necessarily just to “the last days”. The final New Testament book uses bizarre symbolisms in a compilation of Jewish writings. There was no Canon of Hebrew scriptures at the time.

## **Jesus was a brown-skinned Middle Eastern Jew**

Jesus was not a white man. Jesus was a brown-skinned Middle Eastern Jew.

Jesus was an orthodox Jew who taught and practiced Torah.<sup>36</sup> Almost everyone recognizes that the historical Jesus was a Jew who followed ancient Jewish ways.<sup>37</sup> Jesus of Nazareth ... cannot be understood apart from his Jewish context. It is among the few things upon which virtually all contemporary scholars agree.<sup>38</sup>

Jesus was deeply rooted in Israel's ancient, biblical heritage. Jesus accepted all the major tenets of the Jewish faith. ... Jesus, moreover, observed many of the practices associated with Jewish piety in his day.<sup>39</sup>

Jesus fits well with the Judaism of his time, an age of uncertainty and upheaval when many charismatic leaders warned of the impending "end of days". ... Jesus' Jewishness is also evident in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).<sup>40</sup>

When Jesus argued with scribes and Pharisees over, say, the observance of Shabbat, these were intra-Jewish debates. ...

The theology of the New Testament, even its Christology, is Jewish. It represents one offshoot of the tremendous variety within Second Temple Judaism.<sup>41</sup>

## **The *Pharisees* and the *Jesus Movements* survived the Temple's destruction**

Other than the members of the Jesus Movement who were then still part of the Jewish family, the Pharisees were the only major Jewish group to have survived the Roman onslaught of 70 with the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup>

## **EACH SECT FOUGHT FOR SURVIVAL AND FOR SUPREMACY**

### **The destruction of the Temple resulted in dramatic changes within Judaism**

These were very difficult times for Jews in Israel. The Temple had been destroyed and Jerusalem lay in ruins. Its priesthood—the Sadducees—had been virtually wiped out. The Essenes had been decimated at Qumran in 68 ... The Zealots would meet their fate a few years later, in 73 or 74, high atop the fortress of Masada.<sup>43</sup>

The Judaism of today, while having continuity with biblical religion, has also changed dramatically. After A.D. 70, this was a dire necessity. The Romans had destroyed the Temple, the focal point of Jewish life for hundreds of years. Jerusalem lay in ruins. ... Other than the Jesus Movement, only the Pharisees survived.

70 represents a key turning point. It was the catalyst for change—for everyone. ... Henceforth, Judaism would be led by rabbis. ... At the same time, the Jesus Movement in Jerusalem pulled in another direction. ... Paul's Christ Movement veered in yet a third direction.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wilson, 95

<sup>37</sup> Boyarin, 22

<sup>38</sup> Evans, Kindle locations 390-392

<sup>39</sup> Evans, Kindle locations 3589-3593

<sup>40</sup> Baskin, 104

<sup>41</sup> Conway-Jones, (Consult the Bibliography for the URL)

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, 38

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, 98

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, 99

## **Intense, bitter disputes arose between the Jewish sects**

Disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees were bitter and often deadly. These were not just religious in nature but, as so often happens with religion, they were fierce political battles as well—so much so that virtual civil war erupted from time to time between the Sadducees and Pharisees.<sup>45</sup>

When Matthew calls the Pharisees hypocrites (23:13), or implies that God was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem (22:7), or John has Jesus telling “the Jews” that their father is the devil (8:44), the defamatory polemic is indicative of the predicament Christians found themselves in.<sup>46</sup>

## **Jesus-followers disputed with other Jews, including other Jesus-followers**

Matthew’s story of Jesus’ testing presents a series of contests, a challenge of ideas. Religious writings are commonly produced in the environments of contest, challenges, conflicts, differences. The Gospels and the letters by Paul provide examples of contests and conflicts. Authors always find the need to document their positions.

Jesus was a leader of one type of Judaism that was being marginalized by another group, the Pharisees, and he was fighting against them as dangerous innovators.<sup>47</sup> The [Jesus movement] met with resistance from other Jews who did not share their particular beliefs.<sup>48</sup>

The statements attributed to Jesus include exhortations to observe the whole of the Torah (5:17-20). Such statements shed an interesting perspective on his polemics against Pharisees (e.g., Matthew 23), raising the possibility that he and his followers were engaged in internal Jewish controversies akin to the debates among other sects in Second Temple times.<sup>49</sup>

## **The developing Rabbinic Movement was *Matthew’s* major opponent**

During first century CE, following the Second Temple period, the Jesus-followers and Rabbinic Judaism developed in competition.

Written for a community that saw itself as the vanguard of Judaism in the aftermath of the Temple’s destruction, [Matthew’s] gospel stood as a competitive alternative to the developing Rabbinic movement.<sup>50</sup>

## **The Pharisees in Matthew’s Gospel are Matthew’s opponents, not Jesus’ opponents**

The most obvious polemic in [Matthew’s] gospel is directed against ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’. In Matthew these are neither the actual opponents of Jesus, nor are they general examples of haughty behaviour, as in Luke. They are the representatives of the synagogue ‘across the street’ in Matthew’s community.<sup>51</sup>

[The author of] Matthew saw the Pharisees as the chief rivals to his own teachings about Jesus.<sup>52</sup> Matthew’s community at this time is a marginalized group opposed by the Pharisees, whom Matthew portrays as Jesus’ opponents. (Mt 12:34, 39, 45-46; 15:13; 16:1-12).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Wilson, 35

<sup>46</sup> Conway-Jones, (Consult the Bibliography for the URL)

<sup>47</sup> Boyarin, 105

<sup>48</sup> Baskin, 104

<sup>49</sup> Baskin, 104

<sup>50</sup> Dewey [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>51</sup> Stendahl, xi

<sup>52</sup> Pagels, 76

<sup>53</sup> Wray, et al., 116

It is quite feasible to see the author of Matthew as a Jewish follower of the Jesus movement whose community is facing conflict with other Jews, and especially the emergent rabbinic movement of the postwar period. We may thus think of it as “sibling rivalry” in which the followers of Jesus, after being in the region for many years, are now feeling marginalized by their Jewish neighbors.<sup>54</sup>

The New Testament Gospels savage Pharisees as falsely pious and arrogant, but also reveal a competition between them and Jesus for popular support.<sup>55</sup>

### **The writers of *Matthew* strongly condemned the Pharisaic Jews**

The writers of *Matthew* let loose with their condemnations of the Pharisees, their antagonism bordering on obsession. No love is lost on them by the writers. The *Matthew* community regarded the Scribes and Pharisees with utter contempt.

Repeatedly, Matthew portrays Jesus as defeating, silencing and denigrating the Pharisees, the opponents of the Matthew community. (Matthew 3:7—“brood of vipers”; 5:20; 12:14; 12:24; 12:38-39—“evil and adulterous”; 15:1-3—“you break the commandment of God”; 15:12-13—“Blind guides of the blind.”; 16:6, 11—“Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”; 16:12—“Beware ... of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees; 23:2-3—“Do not do as they do.”; 23:13, 14, 23, 25, 27, 29—“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

To stake its claim, to prevent a Community member defecting, the writers of Matthew hurled vehement abuses at the religious leaders they did not agree with and who posed a potential threat. The writers of *Matthew* were determined to give absolute legitimacy to their Community.

When the authors of Matthew and of Luke/Acts adapted Mark's story, they took up [his] critical attitude toward Temple leadership. ... They stigmatized other Jews, with Matthew's Jesus accusing scribes and Pharisees of being “snakes,” “a brood of vipers,” and John's Jesus calling Jews “children of the devil” (John 8:44).<sup>56</sup>

Matthew has Jewish officialdom berated three times as a brood of vipers, twice by Jesus, once by John. ... The Pharisees and Sadducees are *snakes* escaping from the wrath to come like snakes escaping from the *fire*, since God's wrath is fire; they are like the barren *trees* that go for the fire at *the axe of judgement*; the fire in the orchard leads on to the fire by the *threshing-floor*, when the fan succeeds the axe and the *chaff* the deadwood.<sup>57</sup>

### **The writers of *Matthew* identified their Rabbinic opponents as “satan”**

The writers' concepts of Satan and of Devil are those which were being held in 85 CE, not those which would be held later. The evil spirit world created during the Second Temple Period deeply influenced the New Testament Gospels.

Throughout its Gospel, the writers of *Matthew* denigrate those religious leaders of their time, placing their own antagonism towards the Pharisees onto the lips of Jesus and onto the lips of John the Baptist. The writers made Jesus express the views that presented their own contempt toward their contemporary Rabbinic Jews, identifying them with Satan.

In Matthew, Jesus' enemies are identified with Satan; both the Pharisees and Satan oppose the Messiah and seek to gain control over the Kingdom.<sup>58</sup> The New Testament gospels ... consistently associate [Satan] with Jesus' Jewish enemies, primarily Judas Iscariot and the chief priests and scribes.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> White, 312

<sup>55</sup> Baskin, 473

<sup>56</sup> Carr, 235

<sup>57</sup> Goulder, 243

<sup>58</sup> Wray, et al., 116

<sup>59</sup> Pagels, 13

In every case, the decision to place the story of Jesus within the context of God's struggle against Satan tends to ... place increasing blame ... upon Jesus' *Jewish* enemies.<sup>60</sup>

### **Because Apostle Peter hindered Jesus, he was a “Satan”**

One of Jesus' key disciples and a future leader, Apostle Peter, is at one point in Matthew's Gospel called “Satan”, a hindrance to Jesus. This shows that a human could be a “Satan”, an obstacle. Hence Jesus called Peter a *Satan* as he was a “stumbling block”, a “scandal”, an “obstacle”.

When Peter wants to protect Jesus from suffering, Jesus puts his refusal very strongly, ‘Get behind me, Satan. You are an obstacle in my path because the way you think is not God's way but man's’ ([Matthew] 16:23). Peter is like the tempter.<sup>61</sup>

The true meaning of the word ‘Satan’ is revealed in the Matthew passage. Satan, in this case, is not meant to refer to the Devil *per se*, but is used in a generic sense to mean “obstacle”.<sup>62</sup>

The Greek for “stumbling block” is *skandalon*, which gives us not only “scandal” but also “slander,” another well-known activity of a *diabolos*. ... In Matthew 16, Jesus explains to the disciples the path that lies before him—toward the cross. Peter is horrified and tries to dissuade him from his course, whereupon Jesus replies, “Get thee behind me, Satan. For you are a *skandalon* [stumbling block] in my way”. (Matt. 16.23).<sup>63</sup> Jesus calls Peter Satan and repeats the words reported in Mark about his not being on the side of God. He adds, for good measure, “You are a stumbling-block [*skandalon*] to me!” (Matt. 16.23).<sup>64</sup>

## **THE NATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS**

### **The writers of Matthew were highly educated**

*Matthew* is a carefully crafted work, composed more than 50 years after the period that it presents.

Our narrator has given his narrative a well thought out structure that he uses with confident familiarity of the motifs and metaphors of Scripture and the expository tradition. ... The creator of the temptation narrative must have been highly educated in the Jewish (pharisaic) learning of his time.<sup>65</sup>

The temptation narrative was not written by some simple soul who constructed his story with a few suitable quotations from an old and valued scroll: on the contrary, we have in it a narrative whose every detail bears the stamp of the late-Jewish (and early Christian) scribal tradition. It is an example of an early Christian midrash.<sup>66</sup>

### **The New Testament documents are Jewish documents**

The New Testament documents, including the Gospels, are Jewish compositions.

The New Testament books were written before any “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity. In the first century, it was impossible to distinguish between what was “Jewish” and what was “Christian.” ... The followers of Jesus interpreted his life, death, and resurrection within the framework provided by the Jewish scriptures.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Pagels, 15

<sup>61</sup> Malone, 18

<sup>62</sup> Wray, et al., 122-123

<sup>63</sup> Forsyth, 113

<sup>64</sup> Kelly (2006), 89

<sup>65</sup> Gerhardsson, 79-83

<sup>66</sup> Gerhardsson, 11

<sup>67</sup> Conway-Jones, (Consult the Bibliography for the URL)

The Gospels were created by Jews for their contemporary Jewish audience of Jesus-followers. Their form of Judaism was not the form that evolved during the ensuing decades, centuries and millennia. Their writings must not be viewed through the lens of either contemporary Judaism or contemporary Christianity, whatever its form.

The Gospel of Matthew is very much a Jewish creation.<sup>68</sup> Matthew's Gospel relies upon Israel's Scriptures more than any other New Testament text. ... Matthew frequently uses the formula, "to fulfill what was spoken ... by the prophet" and depicts Jesus as the fulfillment of Torah and prophets. The text also displays substantial interest in Jewish observance.<sup>69</sup>

### **Stories are provided in the form of biblical midrash**

Employing creativity, inspiration, and preparedness to expand, the authors of Matthew worked on Mark's accounts, including that of *The Testing of Jesus*.

We see exemplified the three general traits of midrash: creativity, inspiration, and willingness to expand by a few words, a few verses, or a few chapters. Matthew makes stories up: the Infancy stories, the Temptations, the details of Judas.<sup>70</sup> It will not do to reply that the Slaughter of the Innocents and the Temptations are equally legendary; for the whole point is that these are biblical midrash, and not Greek thaumatography.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Gospels were written through the lens of the Temple's destruction**

The Temple, recently hugely enlarged by Herod, stood as the symbol of Judaism.

We need to visualize the Jewish Temple as by far the largest industry within the country, the focal point of agriculture, worship, local government, law, and tourism. ... Herod the Great vastly extended Temple Mount before he died in 4 B.C. He rebuilt the Temple, making it and its platform into one of the largest religious complexes the ancient world had ever seen.<sup>72</sup>

The Temple's destruction by Roman forces in 70 CE was devastating, with the outcome shaping the futures of Judaism and Christianity. Rabbinic Judaism arose out of the ashes and the Gospels were written through the vision and experience of the post-apostolic Church.

These gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) ... look back on Jesus' life from the perspective of the later, postapostolic church. They tell his story through the lens of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, Christians' alienation from other forms of Judaism. ... They rewrite the story of Jesus, in other words, in the wake of Roman trauma.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Gospels are promotional, not literal biographies or documentaries**

Each Gospel is a literary composition. It is not a literal documentary. The Gospels do not provide literal biographies of the life of Jesus Christ.<sup>74</sup> They are more akin to promotional documents. Any explanation of *The Inaugural Testing of Jesus* narrative has to be consistent with this understanding.

The Gospels are pieces of religious literature that seek to promote a particular set of beliefs in Jesus. In that sense they are closer to what we call advertisement or

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<sup>68</sup> Dewey [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>69</sup> Levine, 53

<sup>70</sup> Goulder, 33

<sup>71</sup> Goulder, 397; "thaumatography" means: *a treatise or description of the wonders of the natural world*

<sup>72</sup> Wilson, 32

<sup>73</sup> Carr, 225-226

<sup>74</sup> Refer: Ashton (2007), 24, 27, 332-33; Ashton (2014), 85

propaganda, even though these terms have a far more negative connotation in our culture. For the ancient world, however, writing propagandistic “lives” of famous figures was much more the norm.<sup>75</sup>

### **Recognise the authors' local and immediate contexts**

What caused authors to write? What responses did they anticipate from the reader? What messages were the original writers of Matthew's *Inaugural Testing of Jesus* giving to their immediate community? Why was it written? How was the local community expected to respond?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote for different audiences and sought to address specific issues within their respective communities.<sup>76</sup>

### **The authors' situation drove them and shaped their writings**

Matthew's narrative of Jesus' inaugural testing at the hands of the Evil One must be understood through the authors' experiences at that time. We need to know what drove them to write. People write because they are driven by their environments as well as by the influences they wished to exert on their immediately intended readers.

Recognising the authors' situations and each environment, and all the while taking these into account, should help us determine messages they were delivering to their own community.

What this means for the Gospel authors is that they could—in fact, had to—address the cultural background of their respective audiences. A storyteller must speak in terms, symbols, and metaphors the audience can understand. ... The medium must be intelligible.<sup>77</sup> We can understand much better the significance of our historical documents, including the Gospels, when we imagine a state of affairs that more properly reflects the social situation on the ground of that time.<sup>78</sup>

The Gospels reflect the authors' situations, so that the characters and situations in the texts often relate to events taking place in the authors' own experiences.

Stories of conflict in the gospels can be viewed as dramas created to represent and record actual dialogue between later religious communities. ... The characters and situations in the texts may reflect events from the author's own experience of ideological conflict rather than actual “historical” events involving those characters.<sup>79</sup>

### **Each Gospel described its local community through events that took place decades earlier**

Although Matthew's Gospel portrays events taking place more than 50 years earlier, its authors were focused on addressing situations that were confronting its local community.

The Gospels were written many years after the events that they record. Though narrating events that took place in the first half of the first century CE, the evangelists were addressing themselves to their own contemporaries in the second half of the same century.<sup>80</sup> Gospel authors ... used a Jesus-Pharisee dialogue to heighten the contrast between their movement and Pharisaic Judaism.<sup>81</sup>

Ostensibly historical documents, entirely concerned with events that had occurred in the past, they are actually addressed to the evangelists' own communities and speak to their hopes and fears.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> White, 7

<sup>76</sup> Wray, et al., 115

<sup>77</sup> White, 21

<sup>78</sup> Boyarin, 23

<sup>79</sup> Forma, et. al., 305

<sup>80</sup> Ashton (2014), 45

<sup>81</sup> Wilson, 38

<sup>82</sup> Ashton (2014), 85



Addressing their own community, the authors delivered their current arguments through the medium of Jesus' lips. The authors portrayed their contemporary Rabbinic opponents through voices that the writers of *Matthew* gave to Jesus' apparent opponents, focusing on the Pharisees.

The writers embedded their current desired community values, attitudes and experiences into the text.

Matthew works within Mark's original framework, but updates events to reflect the concerns of his own time, a decade after Mark and after the cataclysmic events of the 70s.<sup>83</sup>

Each Gospel has a religious function and it was created with the desire to influence its own immediate local constituency. The aim of *Matthew* was to show that this was the community delivering the message of the promised Messiah as well as countering the growing influence of Rabbinic Judaism.

Authors, including those who wrote *The Testing of Jesus*, were providing messages for their immediate community to implement, with the prospect of direct and tangible outcomes.

## **SYMBOLS WERE EMPLOYED IN THE "TESTING" STORY**

### **The temptation account is a visionary experience, figurative and symbolic**

The events described in Matthew's account of Jesus' testing are not to be taken as documentary evidence of what took place literally. As with each of Jesus' parables, each event is intended to provide one message. That message is directly addressed to the hearers in Matthew's immediate community.

Current scholarly commentary typically treats the wilderness temptation account as a visionary experience, symbolic description, or dramatization of events throughout Jesus' ministry, and commentaries advise against reading the account as literally historical.<sup>84</sup>

### **Symbols were taken from Israel's experiences**

[Jesus] employs texts drawn exclusively from Deuteronomy (i.e., bread [Deut. 8:3], danger [Deut. 6:16], power [Deut. 6:13]); ... key portions rooted in the wilderness experience of Israel's testing (Deuteronomy 6-8).<sup>85</sup>

For Matthew, the parallels to Jesus' temptation focus on Israel's wilderness experience and Moses' life. ... Matthew capitalizes on themes from Deuteronomy 6-8, precisely where Moses explains how a series of tests revealed Israel's devotion to the Lord. ... The texts Jesus quoted were all from Deuteronomy, passages where Moses explained the *goal* of Israel's wilderness testing (Deut. 8:1-5).<sup>86</sup>

Matthew's construction of the account is utterly drenched in OT theological themes, imagery, and dialogue that reverberates with the words and events of an entire nation tested to its core.<sup>87</sup>

The primary focus is on Deuteronomy 6 – 8, three times quoted by Jesus in answer to Satan's suggestions (v. 4 = Deut. 8:3; v. 7 = Deut. 6:16; v. 10 = Deut. 6:13). It is a description of the lessons God put before the Israelites in the wilderness before their mission of conquest of the promised land, when he tested them (Deut. 8:2) as a man disciplines his son (Deut. 8:5). ... The conception of Jesus as the true Israel, already affirmed by Matthew in 2:15, here comes to fuller expression.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wray, et al., 115

<sup>84</sup> Burke (2017), 16

<sup>85</sup> Schmutzer, 24

<sup>86</sup> Schmutzer, 18

<sup>87</sup> Schmutzer, 15

<sup>88</sup> France, 102

By fasting “forty days and forty nights”, Matthew emphasizes the typological number and its correspondence to Moses and Israel more than Jesus’ growing state of hunger. Unique to Matthew, the “forty nights” further confirms Jesus’ fasting to Moses’ forty-day-and-night fast.<sup>89</sup>

## **THE FIRST TEST: TURN A STONE INTO BREAD**

### **Symbolism of “bread” (Matthew 4:3-4)**

The first test of Jesus focused on his being famished and on a miracle concerning “loaves of bread”. Jesus was offered a stone by the Opposer while he was hungering, famished, struggling in a deserted wilderness.

### **Imagery drawn from the “Miracle of the Loaves”**

Later in *Matthew*, miracles with loaves of bread are revisited when Jesus feeds famished crowds. (Matthew 14:19-21) and once again later, where it is written: “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!” (Matthew 16:11, NRSV)

The warning message by the writers of *Matthew* to “*Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!*” was aimed fairly and squarely directly at the situation confronting their own immediate community. This applies also for the story of Jesus’ inaugural Testing. These narratives were written for the “Matthew” community’s edification.

### **“Yeast” is the false teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

Jesus contrasted the true bread against the Pharisees’ loaves, which contained yeast. The true bread was flat and round, and while the Pharisees’ bread was similarly round, nevertheless it was risen, having the appearance of a stone. It might have a resemblance to the true flat bread, but nevertheless, it was not literally identical. In similar fashion, additions the Pharisees’ Traditions had attempted to make additions to the Scriptures. Just as yeast expands the dough, their Traditions had added to the Scriptures.

During his *Testing*, Jesus rejected bread made from Devil’s instruction and *Matthew*’s community is to do likewise when confronted with demands made by their religious opponents.

### **The “First Test”: Matthew’s likely messages**

While hungering for God’s spiritual food, each Community member is to ensure they reject the Tradition of the Pharisees.

## **THE SECOND TEST: TEST GOD TO RESCUE YOU**

### **Symbolism of the “pinnacle of the temple” (Matthew 4:5-7)**

In the narrative, after 40 days without food, Jesus was taken from the wilderness into the city of Jerusalem, where they managed to climb to the highest part of the Temple.

If anything more were needed to prove that the account is symbolic, surely this temptation [at the pinnacle of the temple] would be sufficient.<sup>90</sup>

Employing the consistent position that the narrative and its elements are symbolic, with a contemporary direct meaning and application for the *Matthew* Community, means that the understanding of this test comes from within that contemporary context.

The devil wishes to place God’s Son’s life in peril. The expression: “the Highest Point of the temple” represents the highest religious political powers. The religious life of *Matthew* Community is similarly threatened by the demands made by the ruling Temple Class who were telling the

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<sup>89</sup> Schmutzer, 22

<sup>90</sup> Burrows [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

Community members to cease giving life to the Community. The religious leaders sought the Matthew Community's religious death.

The second temptation, following Matthew's order, was to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, counting upon God to preserve him from harm. ...

What is meant is putting God's power and goodness to a test, acting rashly and expecting him to extricate us from the results of our folly. ...

If anything more were needed to prove that the account is symbolic, surely this temptation would be sufficient. Quite apart from the problem of transportation from the desert, a challenge to leap from the pinnacle of the temple, taken literally, would hardly deserve a serious reply. Putting God's care to the proof, however, is a very real and very common temptation.<sup>91</sup>

The situation of the second trial is drawn from Daniel, the substance from David: and the last word from Moses.<sup>92</sup>

### **Imagery drawn from Jesus' trial**

Jesus is confronted at the highest peak of the Temple, where the Sadducees hold sway. This is the group that had been involved with Jesus' trial and condemnation some 50 years before *The Gospel of Matthew* was being written.

In similar fashion to Matthew's Testing at the highest point of the Temple, Jesus is again challenged to test God, once again it is said that God could provide rescue, and again he is asked whether he is the son of God.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ...

Jesus said to him, ... "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled?" ...

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death. ...

Then the high priest said to [Jesus], "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." ...

What is your verdict?" They answered, "He deserves death." ...

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death.

They bound him, led him away, and handed him over.<sup>93</sup>

### **Opponents identified with the Temple Class, the emerging Rabbinic Judaism**

The Sadducees would wish Matthew's community of Jesus followers to fold and to cease. The Community must reject the challenges to take spiritual risks, who taunt them that because God is on their side, he would preserve them.

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<sup>91</sup> Burrows [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>92</sup> Goulder, 246

<sup>93</sup> Matthew 26:3-4, 52-54, 59-60, 63, 66; 27:1-2, NRSV, underlining supplied to show referrals to The Temptation.

## The “Second Test”: Matthew’s likely message

Each Community member shall reject every demand made by the Temple Class when it was telling them to cease fellowshiping with the Community.

## **THE THIRD TEST: INHERIT THE WORLD**

### The mountain is clearly symbolic

The symbolic nature of the account is obvious: there is no “very high mountain” (Mt 4:8) in the wilderness of Judea; there is no mountain anywhere from which all the kingdoms of the world are visible.<sup>94</sup>

Israel’s third and greatest temptation was at the mountain, where they fell and worshipped the idol of gold: and Daniel also speaks of an idol of gold before which God’s saints refused to bow down, and of the kingdoms and the glory of them which they might have if they recanted. Daniel and Deuteronomy combine to form the third of Christ’s temptations.<sup>95</sup>

### Symbolism of “high mountain” (high places) (Matthew 4:8-9)

English translations of the Hebrew Bible make many references to “High Places” as places of worship. These sites, sometimes atop an actual high position, were completely acceptable when they were being used as places to worship to Yahweh and offer sacrifices. At times, however, they were used in the worship of other gods.

Whether *the devil took him*, here and in v. 8, literally or in a vision is not clear. The physical impossibility of a mountain commanding a world-wide view (v. 8) may suggest the latter.<sup>96</sup>

Satan shows him the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and offers to give them to Jesus if he will fall down and worship him. The imagery is without doubt taken from Deuteronomy (and its expository tradition), where we find that the high mountain is not only a vantage point from which to view the riches of the world and the place for the conveyance of power and possessions, but also the traditional scene for idolatrous worship. Such agreements, point by point, are naturally not coincidences—its author was a scribe who was a master of his craft. ...

To appreciate the nuances of the passage we must realize that Satan, in offering *the kingdoms of the world and their glory*, is offering the whole might and wealth of the earth, all that the rabbis called “mamon”.<sup>97</sup>

### The religious significance of “high places”

High places were originally dedicated to idol worship (Numbers 33:52; Leviticus 26:30), especially among the Moabites (Isaiah 16:12). The Israelites, practiced Molech worship and built high places for Baal (Jeremiah 32:35). Solomon established idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem and worshiped with them (1 Kings 11:11). High places as sites of Canaanite idol worship (Judges 3:19) extended into the period of Elijah (1 Kings 18: 16–40).<sup>98</sup>

High places also played a major role in Israelite worship (Genesis 12:6-8; Genesis 22:1-2; 1 Samuel 7:16).

[Manasseh] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. ... He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had pulled down, and erected altars to the Baals, made sacred

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<sup>94</sup> Burrows [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>95</sup> Goulder, 246-247

<sup>96</sup> France, 104

<sup>97</sup> Gerhardsson, 66

<sup>98</sup> Gotquestions [Consult the Bibliography for the URL]

poles, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. He built altars in the house of the LORD. ... He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ... Manasseh misled Judah. ... The sites on which he built high places and set up the sacred poles and the images, before he humbled himself, these are written in the records.<sup>99</sup>

### **“Worship Satan” and “inherit the world”**

The third temptation was to seek worldwide political power by worshipping Satan.<sup>100</sup>

The temptation assumes that Satan holds the kingdoms of the world in his power and can give them away as he pleases. The proposal was therefore that Jesus should use Satanic power to further God's ends.<sup>101</sup>

### **Imagery drawn from the “Sermon on the Mount”**

Matthew's *Testing of Jesus* ends on a “high mountain”. Significantly, the succeeding account opens with Jesus on a mountain—a High Place—where he opens with: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”.

The early part of the discourse, now known as the *Sermon on the Mount*, addresses Matthew's community sympathetically. The Sermon then switches tone, decrying traditions presumably being promoted by the Rabbinic Movement, and all the while confirming the Community's whole hearted allegiance to the Torah, just as each of Jesus' retorts had come from Deuteronomy.

Matthew 5:3-16 reads as if the Community's writers were focusing those messages towards their followers, while the tone changes from verse 17 onwards, becoming condemnation of the *Matthew* writers' archenemies, the Pharisees, all the while upholding Jewish values and principles.

### **The authors' theology influenced their narrative**

The writers of Matthew and the writers of Luke had differing theologies. This caused Luke to amend the sequence of Matthew's Tests.

As far as the last temptation is concerned ... the two evangelists do not coincide. According to Matthew, this took place on a mountain (Mt 4:8). According to Luke, the setting was on the uppermost part of the Temple in Jerusalem (Lk 4:9). ...

Matthew placed the last temptation of Christ on a mountain because, in his Gospel, the mountain has special meaning. Luke, on the other hand, situates it in Jerusalem, because it is this city that has a special meaning in the third Gospel. ...

For both, the climax of the confrontation between Jesus and Satan happens precisely in the place where God unfolds and reveals his highest power to save: the mountain for Matthew and Jerusalem for Luke. Matthew makes Jesus climb up to a mountain, while Luke takes him instantly to Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup>

### **The “Third Test”: Matthew's likely messages**

Do not give the Pharisees the respect they seek. The resurrection they promise is a false one. Only through our Community will you inherit the earth.

### **CHALLENGE: “IF YOU ARE A SON OF GOD”**

If you are the Son of God. ... If you will fall down and worship me [Satan].<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> 2 Chronicles 33:1-19, NRSV

<sup>100</sup> Burrows [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>101</sup> Burrows [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>102</sup> Filcatholic: [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>103</sup> Matthew 4:3, 6, 9, NRSV

Satan's question is usually mistranslated to say, "If you are *the* Son of God," but there is no definite article in the text, and it must be taken to say, "If you are *a* Son of God."<sup>104</sup>

### **Matthew's promise: "You are God's sons"**

The authors of *Matthew* are telling each Community member they truly are a Son of God. Each member has been anointed by the Spirit and has also been charged with the task of proclaiming "the Kingdom of God". (Matthew 10:1, 20; 28:19)

Openly declare that you truly are a "Son of God". Rebut the Pharisees' assertions.

## **THE BATTLE IS OVER THE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE**

### **A reasoning over Scripture, not a test to commit a sin**

The communications between Jesus and his Tester are gentlemanly discussions on the meaning of Scripture in a typical Jewish style. This was an intellectual repartee over the meaning and application of Hebrew Scripture, a war with words. It was a debate in the form of midrash (a meditation on Scripture).

The narrator skilfully depicts the Satan character as a skilled debater of Scripture, who, like a poet gradually intensifies the onslaught, only to be defeated by one who is more skilled at handling the Scriptures.

Matthew borrows sayings from the Q source and shows Satan appearing three times to 'test' Jesus, as Pharisees and other opponents will test him. Here the Q source turns Satan into a caricature of a scribe, a debater skilled in verbal challenge and adept in quoting the Scriptures for diabolic purposes.<sup>105</sup>

### **The temptation is comparable to an exegetical battle between Rabbis and heretics**

Jesus' temptation in the desert (4.1– 11) is a virtual exegetical battle, with Jesus' parrying each of Satan's challenges with a scriptural verse, often in its interpreted sense. Comparable exegetical duels between rabbis and heretics are found throughout rabbinic literature (see Ber. R. 8.9; 25.1; Koh. R. 1.8.4; b. Sanh. 38b).<sup>106</sup>

### **Satan defeated by Midrash**

The battleground was the Torah, with Jesus quoting Deuteronomy (*Book of D'varim*). This episode was an intellectual repartee over the meaning and application of Hebrew Scriptures.

Jesus and the devil wage war with words.<sup>107</sup>

From a form-critical point of view, the longer temptation narrative [by Matthew] is to be placed in the category of *haggadic midrash*. The tempter bases his assertions on passages or themes from the Scriptures, and Jesus answers with scriptural quotations. The three decisive replies in the dialogue are all from Deut 6-8, the deuteronomic exposition of how God allowed his "son" Israel to wander for forty years in the desert that he might discipline and test him.<sup>108</sup>

The temptation narrative is an early Christian midrash, based on a text from the Old Testament, as this was interpreted in the late Jewish period.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Kelly (2006), 86

<sup>105</sup> Pagels, 80-81

<sup>106</sup> Levine, 826; also Stern, 567

<sup>107</sup> Schmutzer, 19

<sup>108</sup> Gerhardsson, 11

<sup>109</sup> Gerhardsson, 17

Of the four Gospels, Matthew is the one most suffused with interpretations that resemble rabbinic midrash as well as other modes of early Jewish exegesis.<sup>110</sup>

The temptation pericope is in the form of *haggadic midrash*, and is to be read more figuratively than literally.<sup>111</sup>

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- Through the medium of a carefully crafted document, the writers of Matthew used it to attack their religious opponents. They assigned their views to the lips of Jesus.
- Their story of *The Testing of Jesus* formed an integral part of their Gospel, and the story was consistent with the symbolic style employed throughout.
- In Matthew's account of the *Testing*, Jesus and his archenemy assail one another with Scripture in a type of Midrash—as took place in the Jews' real life.
- The *Gospel*, along with its *Testing*, was created to be a religious political defence of the Community and a condemnation of their local Pharisees.

What are we to make of this exchange? The first conclusion is obvious: it was not intended as a real encounter between Jesus and DEVIL. It is rather a fanciful elaboration on the testing episode in Mark, expanded into a typical rabbinical “show-debate”. Such debates were a form of midrash (meditation on Scripture) that displayed an authoritative figure responding to a series of challenges by citing the correct passage from Scripture. ...

One effect of Matthew's dramatization of Satan's testing techniques is to put the relations between him and Jesus on a rather “gentlemanly” basis. Specifically, Jesus responds readily to Satan's inquiries, and does not denounce him as “evil.”<sup>112</sup>

This presentation [by *Matthew*], adopted also by *Luke* ..., is the most extraordinary episode in all the Gospels. It was clearly not meant to be taken as a real event. Rather it is a kind of dramatic elaboration on events, of the sort that Hebrew biblical commentators would call a *midrash*. It is also like the fictional parables that Jesus tells to make his points. Mark's simple statement is transformed into a set of encounters.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Levine, 826

<sup>111</sup> Burke (2017), 16

<sup>112</sup> Kelly (2006), 87, 88-89

<sup>113</sup> Kelly (2017), Kindle Locations 783-790

## **BONUS! : THE REVOLUTION THAT CREATED MATTHEW’S SATAN AND DEVIL**

### ***Satan* and *Devil* in the earliest New Testament documents**

Three terms are used to describe Christ’s adversary in the Synoptic temptation pericope: ‘satan’, ‘the tempter’, and ‘the devil’. Elsewhere in Matthew (and only Matthew), the term ‘the evil one’ may also be used though this is debated in the literature. The Synoptic writers introduce these terms early in their gospels, without explanation of their meaning.<sup>114</sup>

### **Paul, the earliest New Testament writer, applied “*Satan*” to those who hindered him**

The genuine writings of Apostle Paul are the earliest New Testament documents: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans. Paul only employs “Satan”; he never uses “Devil” (Diabolos). Paul died in 64 CE.

Although thirteen letters in the New Testament are attributed to Paul, most biblical scholars agree that only Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are from his own hand.

In these seven letters, Satan appears sporadically, mentioned less than a dozen times in all seven epistles combined. When Paul chooses to use the word “Satan” in his letters, he has one particular role in mind: Satan as obstructor. Specifically, Paul uses “Satan” to refer to those who hinder—usually through undermining Paul’s teaching.<sup>115</sup>

Every mention of Satan in the Pauline corpus involves the Devil working through a human agent to thwart Paul’s mission.<sup>116</sup>

When [Paul] tells the Thessalonians that he has not been able to come to see them because Satan hindered him (*enekopsen*), the verb he chooses has the same root (*koptō*, to strike, cut, or lay waste) as *proskomma*, another word for an obstacle or cause of offense, like *skandalon*.<sup>117</sup>

### **Mark, the earliest gospel, only used *Satan*, not *Devil***

Mark, the earliest New Testament Gospel, was written about 70 CE. As with Paul, it uses “Satan”; it does not use “Devil”.

### **Developments in the Testing narratives**

Satan is not presented as the evil one in [Mark’s] Gospel. Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tested for forty days and forty nights. ... Matthew and Luke also put the temptations in the desert into a positive context, that of Jesus being led by the Holy Spirit.<sup>118</sup>

[In] Matthew, ... the Satan is first simply referred to as ‘the tempter’. After the first test about turning stones into bread, he is called ‘the devil’. It is the same after the other two tests. But Jesus’ final words are, ‘Be off, Satan!’ ...

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<sup>114</sup> Burke (2017), 1

<sup>115</sup> Wray, et al., 129

<sup>116</sup> Wray, et al., 136

<sup>117</sup> Forsyth, 267

<sup>118</sup> Malone, 18



Luke's devil has some dominion over the whole world and offers Jesus his power and glory if Jesus will worship him. This is a powerful development of the theme where the devil now has cosmic power and wants to be worshipped.<sup>119</sup>

### **Satan immediately prior to the Apocalyptic Second Temple Period**

The *bene ha-elohim* (sons of God) are the heavenly court, the pantheon of the Lord. But some of them sin, through lust or pride. If through pride, they are cast down from heaven; if through lust, they descend voluntarily but are then cast down into the pit as punishment for their sins. They are imprisoned in the darkness, either in the earth (in its valleys or beneath its surface or in the air. They not only sin themselves but also tempt humanity to sin. Their chief is the chief of tempters. Sometimes all sin is attributed to him, yet Yahweh explicitly grants him the right to continue to do mischief.<sup>120</sup>

That God permits Satan to stand and speak before him in the heavenly court indicates the origin of Satan as one of the *bene ha-elohim*.<sup>121</sup>

[In Zechariah and in Job] Satan is now a personality with the function of accusing, opposing, and harming human beings. He is not yet the principle of evil, which remains with the God. [Satan] is still one of the heavenly court and does nothing without the God's consent and will.<sup>122</sup>

### **Satan evolved during the apocalyptic Second Temple Period**

In the Apocalyptic period the concept of the origin of evil was very much in flux.<sup>123</sup>

One of the earliest and most influential Apocalyptic accounts of the ruin of the *bene ha-elohim* (Sons of God) is the First Book of Enoch.<sup>124</sup>

The earliest known version of the fallen angel (called Semyaz or Azaz'el) and his conflict with God over rule of the world is that found in 1 Enoch 1–36.<sup>125</sup>

The myth of the Watchers as told in Enoch thus squarely attributes sin to the angels and describes their punishment.<sup>126</sup>

In Jubilees, then, the Watchers do not introduce sin, for they come in the days of Jared, five hundred years after the creation. Yet they and their progeny exacerbate the sins of the world. Their leader Mastema or Satan, as prince of the fallen angels and leader of the tempters of mankind, has now acquired a pronounced diabolical cast. Yet Yahweh himself has not only permitted the sin of the Watchers and the temptation of men, he has explicitly granted Mastema the right to keep one of ten demons in order to continue to exert his will over man. Mastema is the leader of the fallen Watchers, but he appears also to be the lieutenant of Yahweh. The author of Jubilees cannot forget that Yahweh himself must be the ultimate author of the ills of the world.<sup>127</sup>

This crucial development in the history of the Devil was to be further advanced in the Apocalyptic period. In the Book of Jubilees the *evil mal'ak* [angel/messenger] of is wholly independent of the Lord. The prince of the evil spirits, Mastema, and his followers tempt, accuse, destroy, and punish mankind, taking onto themselves all the

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<sup>119</sup> Malone, 18 (**bold** supplied)

<sup>120</sup> Russell (1977), 197

<sup>121</sup> Russell (1992), 33

<sup>122</sup> Russell (1977), 199-200

<sup>123</sup> Russell (1977), 192

<sup>124</sup> Russell (1977), 186

<sup>125</sup> White, 28

<sup>126</sup> Russell (1977), 192

<sup>127</sup> Russell (1977), 193-194

evil characteristics once attributed to Yahweh. ... Where the *mal'ak Yahweh* or Yahweh himself had in the Old Testament slain the firstborn of Egypt, that carnage is now Mastema's work. And where Yahweh's power had mysteriously worked against his own followers, that power is now ascribed to Mastema. In Jubilees, Mastema, rather than Yahweh, meets Moses in the desert purposing to kill him. Mastema puts Abraham to the test, rather than Yahweh's doing it himself.<sup>128</sup>

Later, in the Hellenistic *Book of the Wisdom of Solomon*, Satan has even more evidently become the opponent, not only of man, but of the Lord. ... This is another dimension of the development of the word *satan*: Satan as the opponent of the Lord as well as of humanity.<sup>129</sup>

Throughout the New Testament the normative experience of humans encountering satan (or "the devil", or "the tempter"), is temptation by an unseen and voiceless agent, described only in the most general terms. Consequently, belief in a specific supernatural evil being should not be simply assumed when approaching the temptation pericope even in its final form in the Synoptics.<sup>130</sup>

In the New Testament, the word [Devil] appears to be used interchangeably with "Satan". Mark refers to "Satan" five times, but never uses "devil". Matthew has three of the former, but six of the latter. The Fourth Gospel has one instance of "Satan" (none in the Epistles of John), while the 'devil' (as Satan) occurs twice in the Gospel and three times in the Epistles.<sup>131</sup>

### **An array of names was assigned to the evil one**

A wealth of names of different origins—Belial, Mastema, Azazel, Satanail, Sammael, Semyaza, and Satan—congealed during the Apocalyptic period around one figure, that of the Evil One, a being who personified the single origin and essence of evil.<sup>132</sup>

The names of the Devil vary, particularly in the Apocalyptic period: he is Belial, Mastema, Azazel, Satanail, Sammael, Semyaza, or Satan. These names have different origins, and the beings they denote differ in their origins and functions one from another. But gradually they coalesce.

The Devil becomes a spiritual being personifying the origin and essence of evil. ... As the Devil has many names in different religions, so he has many names within the Judeo-Christian tradition itself. Of all these names, that of Satan became the greatest.

The victory of "Satan" over "Azazel" or "Belial" is less the victory of one kind of being over another than the victory of one name over the others. Satan, Azazel, Belial, and Mastema were none of them in their origins a principle of evil, but in the Apocalyptic literature they converge in that direction.<sup>133</sup>

The term 'Watchers' is first used in En. 10:7 and is the most common term employed by the Apocalyptic writers. It appears in the Old Testament only in the Book of Daniel, which is itself an Apocalyptic book written 166-164 B.C.

*Belial* (*Beliar*) may derive from *beli*, 'without,' and *ya'al*, 'profit', and so mean 'worthless'. ...

In the Qumran texts, the term [belial] is used in a number of ways, sometimes merely as an adjective connoting evil, other times as a name of the personification of evil. In the Old Testament, Belial appears in Deut. 13:13; Judg. 19:22; 20:13; and I Sam.

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<sup>128</sup> Russell (1977), 204

<sup>129</sup> Russell (1977), 200

<sup>130</sup> Burke (2017), 18

<sup>131</sup> Bakers Evangelical Dictionary of the Bible: Satan.

<sup>132</sup> Russell (1992), 33

<sup>133</sup> Russell (1977), 188-189

1:16; 2:12; 10:27; 25:17, but he has little or no personality. The term *belial* is often simply a common noun signifying people who act reprehensibly

Belial appears in the Apocalyptic and Qumran literature as the prince of evil. He is completely absent in Rabbinical literature.

*Mastema* may derive from the Hebrew *mastemab*, “enmity,” or the Aramaic *mastima*, “accuser,” and so is related to Satan. *Mastema* does not appear in the Old Testament but is a prince of evil in the Apocryphal period.

*Azazel* or *Asasel* appears in Lev. 16:8 and 10:26, where his personality is ill defined; there he seems to be the principle of impurity. Later he becomes a prince of Evil. His name may derive from ‘*azaz* and ‘*el* and mean the “strong one of the God.” He was originally a god of the desert and may derive from the Canaanite god ‘*Ariz*, who caused the sun to burn strongly. There is a possible influence of the Egyptian Seth on Azazel.

*Satanael* or *Satanail* is derived from *Satan*; he does not appear in the Old Testament but is a prince of evil in the Apocalyptic period.

*Semyaza*, whose name may mean “rebel” or “watchers”, appears briefly as leader of the evil angels in the Apocalyptic literature. *Semyaza* is first called their leader in En. 6:3.

*Beelzebub* or *Beelzeboul* appears in the Old Testament as a *god* of Ekron in 2 Kings 1:2-6; 16. The Septuagint and New Testament translated the Hebrew as *Beelzeboul*, which was adapted by the Vulgate as *Beelzebub*.<sup>134</sup>

### The meaning of “satan”

The Hebrew word *satan* derives from a root meaning ‘oppose,’ ‘obstruct,’ or ‘accuse’. It was translated by the Greek *diabolos*, ‘adversary’, whence it passed into Latin *diabolus*, German *Teufel*, and English *devil*. The basic denotation of the term, then, is ‘opponent’. In this simple sense the Word *satan* appears as a common noun several times in the Old Testament in reference to a human opponent.<sup>135</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, “satan” meant an adversary, an opposer, and this reference can include a reference may refer to an earthly human, including people.

The Hebrew word *satan* means “an adversary, one who resists”. ... The word is used also of various persons in the Old Testament as *adversaries*, including David (1 Sam 29:4), Rezon of Damascus (1 Kings 11:23; 25), and the angel of the Lord (Numbers 22:22, 32).

In the Old Testament, Satan is not an evil principle opposing God. In Job, “the Satan” is not God’s adversary, but Job’s. He acts as one of God’s subordinates/courtiers to follow his directives.<sup>136</sup> The idea of the devil or Satan as a fallen angel is not in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, Satan (or mostly the *satan*, really a title and not a name) is a member of the heavenly council of God; in Job 1– 2 and Zechariah 3 he serves God as his “prosecuting attorney.”<sup>137</sup>

### The Septuagint introduced *Diabolos*, “The Devil”

The writers of the Septuagint introduced the word *diabolos* from the Greek. It is rendered as “Devil”. This name was accepted by some New Testament writers and was also applied to the evil spirit leader, Satan.

<sup>134</sup> Russell (1977), 188-189, footnote

<sup>135</sup> Russell (1977), 189; also see: Russell (1992), 33, Kindle

<sup>136</sup> Satan Bakers Evangelical Dictionary of the Bible: Satan

<sup>137</sup> Smith, Kindle locations 792-793

By the third century BCE, many Jews read Greek literature and had begun to use Greek for writing and translating Jewish texts. The Septuagint translation of the Bible was a response to the needs of Diaspora Jews who were unable to read Hebrew.<sup>138</sup>

The term “the devil” is virtually never used in pre-Christian Second Temple literature outside the Old Greek texts of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>139</sup>

Where the archenemy of God is in view, the LXX renders (*ha*)-*satan* with the Greek *ho diabolos*. This Greek term, like its Hebrew counterpart, (*ha*)-*satan*, denotes an evil figure opposed to the will of God, and standing again like a prosecutor in God’s court (TDNT, 7:151-163). Depending on the context, such a figure could be called in English: Accuser, Adversary, or Devil.<sup>140</sup>

Chronologically, Matthew is the earliest New Testament document to use the Greek word “Devil” (*Diabolos*). While Paul and Mark, who each preceded Matthew, use the Hebrew word *Satan*, the *Gospel of Matthew* introduces the Greek word, *Diabolos*—*Devil*.

The other common appellation for Satan in the New Testament is ‘the devil’ (*diabolos*), not found in the Old Testament, but thirty-four times here, meaning one who is traducer, a slanderer.

The word [*diabolos*] often translates *satan* in the Septuagint (either as “the satan” or an “adversary”). In the New Testament, the “devil” becomes “an evil principle/being standing against God”.<sup>141</sup>

The Greek term (*Satana*) is a carry-over from the Hebrew (*ha*)-*satan*. The Greek version (LXX) rarely uses this term. When it does, the meaning denotes an adversary on the earthly plain.<sup>142</sup>

## Demons

The origins of the Devil and of the demons are quite distinct. The demons derived from the minor evil spirits of the Near East, whereas the Devil derives from the Hebrew *mal’ak*, the shadow of the Lord, and the Mazdaist principle of evil. The demons are lesser spirits, the Devil the personification of evil itself.<sup>143</sup>

The Devil—the personification of evil itself—is to be distinguished from the demons, the evil spirits who serve as his henchmen.<sup>144</sup>

The minor malicious spirits that appeared from time to time in Hebrew religion resemble those of other cultures and were in large part derived from those of Canaan.<sup>145</sup>

There is no evidence of any kind that there ever was a petty demon named Satan, and although there are many manifestations of evil among Hebrew demons, no demon (with the one exception of Azazel) ever approaches the lofty position of apotheosis of evil.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Baskin, 225

<sup>139</sup> Burke (2017), 4

<sup>140</sup> Shillington, Kindle location 5073

<sup>141</sup> Bakers Evangelical Dictionary of the Bible: Satan

<sup>142</sup> Shillington, Kindle location 5073

<sup>143</sup> Russell (1992), 45

<sup>144</sup> Russell (1992), 33

<sup>145</sup> Russell (1977), 215

<sup>146</sup> Russell (1977), 176

## **“Satan” in pre-Christian writings is predominantly a common noun, not a name**

The term *satan*, whether in Greek or Hebrew, is used rarely in pre-Christian literature and never as a proper name.<sup>147</sup>

In Second Temple Period literature, the term “*satan*” is predominantly used as a common noun rather than a personal name; the term “the devil” is rarely if ever used to refer to a supernatural evil being; and the terms “the tempter” and “the evil one” have no pre-Christian witness as a reference to a supernatural evil being.<sup>148</sup>

Second Temple Period stories ... all record an obedient angelic servant of God testing a righteous man, rather than an evil supernatural opponent of God tempting a righteous man to sin.<sup>149</sup>

Satan in 1 Enoch is not described as one of the evil angels, and is represented as the obedient servant of God rather than an evil being.<sup>150</sup>

In each of these instances in the OT, the Satan figure is not a demon of the underworld totally separated from the court of the Lord. On the contrary, Satan is seen in the same judicial assembly with the Lord, discussing the destiny of the people of God in the world.<sup>151</sup>

## **These “evil” nouns possibly mean “the human inclination to sin”**

Some scholars believe the words that personify evil are common nouns that portray the natural human inclination towards sin.

Should that be the case, and the Jewish term *Yetzer harah* carries this sense, this would show the attitude of the writers of *Matthew* towards their opponents, who they picture in the Testing Narrative as “Satan” and as “Devil”. The Pharisees and their like would thus be depicted as naturally inclined to evil.

Acts 5:3-4, “*satan* filled your heart” is placed in parallel with “you thought up this deed in your heart”, which reads naturally as a description of the evil inclination being characterized as *satan*, rather than as Ananias being tempted by a supernatural evil being.<sup>152</sup>

In Wisdom of Sirach (21:27), the Greek term (*satan*) is used of the evil inclination.<sup>153</sup>

Philo consistently identifies the evil inclination as the cause of sin.<sup>154</sup>

The term “evil one” is used [in the Talmuds] several times to address the evil inclination. ... Several times in the Talmudic literature “evil one” is used in the vocative of the evil inclination.<sup>155</sup>

In 1 Enoch [Satan] is used of an obedient angelic servant of God, in 11Q5 xix 13-16 (the Prayer for Deliverance), it most likely refers to the evil inclination, and in in 4Q Barkhi Nafshi the [Hebrew: Satan] of Zechariah 3 is the evil inclination.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Burke (2017), 2

<sup>148</sup> Burke (2017), 1

<sup>149</sup> Burke (2017), 19

<sup>150</sup> Burke (2017), 9

<sup>151</sup> Shillington, Kindle location 5088

<sup>152</sup> Burke (2017), 18

<sup>153</sup> Burke (2017), 2

<sup>154</sup> Burke (2017), 6

<sup>155</sup> Burke (2017), 13, 15

<sup>156</sup> Burke (2017), 14

In Judaism, the *yetzer harah* is the inclination or impulse to evil, popularly identified with the lusts of the flesh. It also leads to such sins as greed, anger, revenge, violence, and idolatry.

The term *yetzer* refers to the inclination toward either good or evil. The *yetzer harah* is thus balanced by the *yetzer ha-tov* or tendency toward good. In Judaism, the *yetzer harah* is not the product of the Human Fall, as in Christian teaching, but is part of the original creation of God.<sup>157</sup>

The term *yetzer* (from the biblical root יצר, “to create, creature”) has been translated in numerous ways: “inclination,” “tendency,” “disposition,” “instinct,” and “desire,” to name only a few. ... They fail to present the *yetzer* as a reified [real] object, a thing, residing inside a person.<sup>158</sup>

### **There is no “the evil one” in Second Temple literature**

The Greek term “the evil one” has no Second Temple pre-Christian witness as a reference to a supernatural evil being.<sup>159</sup>

Summarizing the lexicographical evidence, Black notes ‘this term or designation [*the evil one*] for Satan is ... nowhere attested in classical, Hellenistic, or Jewish Greek sources’, which he gives as the reason against reading it as ‘the evil one’ even in Matthew.

He goes on to say ‘The situation is no different when we turn to Hebrew or Aramaic sources’, quoting Dalman saying, ‘The designation “the Evil One” for Satan never appears in Jewish literature’. ... He quotes Harder saying ‘This is a distinctive NT usage for which no model has been found in the world into which Christianity came.’<sup>160</sup>

### **“The Tempter” has no pre-Christian witness**

The term “the tempter” has no pre-Christian witness in the intertestamental or Qumran literature at all. ...

This term [the tempter] was not used of any evil supernatural evil being in the pre-Christian literature, and only later became an established term for Satan among Christians (perhaps by the end of the first century), from which time it was added by Christian scribes to earlier Jewish works which did not originally use it.<sup>161</sup>

There is no evidence that the satanological terminology used in the Synoptic temptation pericope normatively referred to a specific supernatural evil being in Second Temple Period literature, casting doubt on the common assumption that this term identifies such a being in the temptation pericope.<sup>162</sup>

The temptation pericope’s satanological terminology (at least in its original form), does not refer to a supernatural evil being.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> New World Encyclopedia: *Yetzer-Hara* [consult the Bibliography for the URL]

<sup>158</sup> Rosen-Zvi, (2009), 1 (footnote 2)

<sup>159</sup> Burke (2017), 9

<sup>160</sup> Burke (2017), 11

<sup>161</sup> Burke (2017), 13, 14

<sup>162</sup> Burke (2017), 22

<sup>163</sup> Burke (2017), 19

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