

# Matthew 4:5-7

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-4/matthew-45-7/>

*For the second temptation, the devil takes Jesus to the top of God's Temple in Jerusalem and tells Him to jump. The devil argues that this will publicly proclaim Jesus's identity as the Divine Messiah. The devil uses scripture in his attempt to deceive Jesus. Jesus rejects the temptation with another passage from Deuteronomy.*

The parallel account of this event is found in Luke 4:9-12.

After Jesus resisted the devil's first temptation, *the tempter* tries a second time. He takes Jesus *into the holy city* of Jerusalem and has *Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple*. The temple is the most holy and prominent building inside Jerusalem. It was Herod the Great's expansion of Nehemiah's rebuild of Solomon's original temple built to honor God.

Once again, the devil uses subtle language, "*If You are the Son of God*" to question Jesus's divine identity. The devil tempts Him to *throw Yourself down*, that is to jump off from the temple's *pinnacle*. The highest point of Solomon's temple was the archway 120 cubits (2 Chronicles 3:4) or 180 feet. Herod's temple was bigger than its predecessor so it is reasonable to suspect that its highest *pinnacle* would have been even taller. The point is that to survive a free fall from such a height would be an obvious miracle.

The location for this temptation has special significance. The first reason is practical. The temple was the most public building in all Judea. If a man jumped from the temple and survived, many people would see it. Talk would spread from the Sadducees to Roman officials. Word of such an event and a man would quickly move not only throughout Judea but throughout the Roman world.

The second reason is symbolic. The temple was located on top of a hill in the northern part of the city. 2 Chronicles 3:1 tells us that this was Mt. Moriah, the same hill where Abraham offered Isaac to God, before the Lord stopped him. The symmetries between Abraham's sacrifice and the devil's second temptation would not have been lost to Jesus or Matthew's Jewish readers. Both Jesus and Isaac were promised sons. And as God had spared Abraham's son, Isaac, upon Mt. Moriah, surely, He would do the same for His own divine Son.

The devil emphasizes this point by quoting the Messianic Psalm 91:11-12, which speaks of God's protection for the one who trusts in the Lord. The tempter says, *He will command His angels concerning You*, but omits or infers the second half of this verse, which reads "To guard you in all your ways." He then quotes Psalm 91:12 in full: *On their hands they will bear You up/ So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.*

The devil's use of scripture in this temptation is in response to Jesus's use of scripture at the first test. Ironically, the devil's citation, though not a prophecy, is another Old Testament reference in support of Jesus being the Messiah. (It is Matthew's seventh scripture reference). The psalm the

devil uses to make his case was carefully crafted and selected for Jesus. Jesus denied the devil's first temptation by telling him that Man lives by trusting God alone. The devil now counteracts and says, "Ok, since you trust God alone then prove it by jumping off the Temple" before quoting a Psalm whose main theme is about trusting God alone.

*Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* Once again Jesus responds to the devil's temptation by quoting law found in Deuteronomy.

"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah." (Deuteronomy 6:16)

Massah means "to tempt; to test; to try." Massah refers to a place near Mount Horeb (Sinai). Massah received its name from Moses because it was there that the Israelites put God to the test (tempted Him) and demanded of Him to give them water. This incident is recorded in Exodus 17:1-7. The Israelites tested God by saying "Is God among us or not?" In other words, "If God doesn't do our bidding, then perhaps we will just need to get another god."

The essence of the second temptation of Jesus is to test God in the same way Israel tested God at Massah. Satan tempted Jesus to treat God as a genie in a bottle. To demand God do His bidding, rather than submit to God's bidding. Jesus recognized this, and made it clear that we are to accept our circumstances with faith that this is for our best, rather than demand God perform for us according to our plans and desires. God had promised to provide for Israel, but they demanded He provide on their time schedule.

By using this passage Jesus reminds the devil that it is not for us to demand anything of God. We are to trust God. God does not answer to us. We answer to Him.

The first two temptations mark the first instances the phrase *Son of God* appears in Matthew. It is interesting to note additional appearances of *Son of God* in Matthew:

In Matthew 8:29, Jesus encounters some men possessed by demons: "And they cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'"

This occurrence of *Son of God* is spoken by demons, who acknowledge that Jesus is the *Son of God*.

In each case, the initial use of *Son of God* comes from spiritual forces who recognize who Jesus is. This is a powerful testimony that Jesus the Messiah is God.

At the end of Matthew, when Jesus is on trial, Matthew notes in "But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN'"(Matthew 26:63-64).

Matthew makes clear that Jesus testified of Himself that He is the Son of God. The third spiritual validation of His true identity, that He is truly God.

The next occurrence of the phrase comes when Jesus is hanging on the cross. The tempter shows up through the mouth of humans, who taunt Jesus:

“And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matt 27:39-44).

The usage at the cross essentially repeats the second temptation in the wilderness: if Jesus were REALLY the *Son of God* then God would rescue Him from the cross. It is the same sort of taunt about jumping off the temple. Of course, in reality Jesus was being obedient in going to the cross.

After Jesus died on the cross, Matthew records the words of a Roman centurion:

“Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”(Matthew 27:54)

In these verses where Matthew uses the phrase *Son of God*, Matthew demonstrates Jesus is God through the testimony of spiritual beings, through Jesus testifying of Himself, and through the testimony of Roman soldiers who observed His death.

### **Biblical Text**

**4:5-7 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said 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 strike Your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You**