

After all, the first occurrence of “Son of Man” lies in Luke 5:24. Commentators rightly draw lines of correspondence between Jesus and Israel in the wilderness temptation, but the verbal exchange between Jesus and the devil reveals an important and often-neglected layer.

Matthew and Mark narrate the wilderness temptation following Jesus’s baptism (Matt. 3:13–4:11; Mark 1:9–13), whereas Luke prefaces the temptation with a genealogy (Luke 3:23–38). The last two lines of the genealogy read, “the son of Adam, the son of God” (3:38). What’s the significance? Why trace Jesus’s ancestry back to humanity’s progenitor? Luke wants his readers to view the wilderness temptation through the lens of Adam. Jesus is the second Adam who has come to do what Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Israel failed to do—that is, perfectly trust God’s promises, subdue evil, and ensure that God’s glorious presence reaches the far corners of the earth. Adam’s failure in the garden and Israel’s failure in the wilderness wanderings set the stage for Jesus’s success in the wilderness temptation (see chapter 5).

The devil appears to tempt Jesus at the end of a forty-day fast in the Judean wilderness, perhaps when he is most vulnerable (Luke 4:2; cf. Matt. 4:2). While all three temptations are important, we need only survey the second and third. The devil leads Jesus to a “high place” where they could view “all the kingdoms of the world” (Luke 4:5 NIV). While we are not privy to the precise mechanics of the vision, a major point of the second temptation is that the devil claims to possess “authority” over the earthly kingdoms and promises to hand over these kingdoms to Jesus if he will “worship” him (4:6–7).

The devil’s promise in the second temptation is remarkably similar to the LXX (OG) of Daniel 7:14 (see table 6.1).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> François Bovon mentions that Luke 4:6 is “reminiscent” of Dan. 7:14 and that it is a “linguistic parody” (*Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, Hermeneia, trans. Christine M. Thomas [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002], 143). While he rightly notices the connection between Luke 4:6 and Dan. 7:14, he fails to tease out its significance in the immediate context of Luke’s narrative.

Table 6.1 Comparison of Daniel 7:14 and Luke 4:6

Daniel 7:14 (NETS translation of LXX-OG)	Luke 4:6
“And royal <i>authority</i> [ <i>exousia</i> ] was given [ <i>edothē</i> ] to him, and all the nations of the earth according to posterity, and all <i>honor</i> [ <i>doxa</i> ] was serving him. And his <i>authority</i> [ <i>exousia</i> ] is an everlasting <i>authority</i> [ <i>exousia</i> ].”	“To you I will give [ <i>dōsō</i> ] all this <i>authority</i> [ <i>tēn exousian</i> ] and their <i>glory</i> [ <i>tēn doxan</i> ].”

If the allusion is valid, then the devil may be consciously parodying the *Ancient of Days* in the prophecy of Daniel 7. Commentators neglect the implications of this allusion and the wider context of Daniel 7, so we will attempt to understand the wilderness temptation against the backdrop of Daniel 7.

The Ancient of Days appears to “give” the eternal kingdom to the son of man on account of his successful defeat of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:14; see 7:11). Pushing deeper into Daniel 7, we notice that boastful words spew from the little horn or ruler of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:8, 11). Later, in the interpretative portion of the chapter, the little horn “shall speak words against the Most High . . . and shall think to change the times and the law” (Dan. 7:25). Furthermore, Daniel 11:36 states that he “shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.” When we compare Daniel 7 and Luke 4, a handful of connections jump out at us in astonishing ways.

First, the Ancient of Days alone possesses the authority to hand over the kingdom to the Son of Man—not the devil (Dan. 7:9–10). As a result of Adam and Eve’s fall, God, in his wisdom and sovereignty, temporarily handed over the earthly domain to the devil (see e.g., Job 1:6–12; 2:17; Rev. 12:7–12). The devil’s statement that his authority “has been given” (*paradedotai*; NIV) to him is correct.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere in

8 The passive form of *didōmi* is nearly a technical term in Revelation and may even be derived from Dan. 7:14 when dominion “is given” (*edothē*) to the son of man. Throughout the book of Revelation, God or the Lamb issues decrees that Satan/demons execute (see e.g., Rev. 7:2; 8:3; 9:1, 3, 5; 13:5, 7, 14–15). For example, in 6:2 the Lamb gives a demonic agent (the white horse) the authority to wage warfare on the church and unbelievers. Additionally, in

the Synoptics, the devil is labeled the “prince of the demons” (Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). According to John 12:31, he is the “ruler of this world” (cf. John 14:30; 16:11; cf. 1 John 5:19). Paul even calls him the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2; cf. Mart. Isa. 2:4; CD 5.18; 1QM 17.5). The New Testament affirms that the devil was indeed given the right to rule over the earth for a discrete amount of time, but he was never given the authority to hand it over.<sup>9</sup>

Second, a chief characteristic of the little horn is his boastful and blasphemous speech. Could it be that the devil’s blasphemous promise that he has the authority to hand over the kingdom in Luke 4 unwittingly fulfills the prophecy of the little horn in Daniel 7 and 11? Probably. To tempt Jesus, Satan appears to invoke the prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14 *by assuming his role as Ancient of Days*. But his temptation is also blasphemous—thereby fulfilling Daniel 7:8, 25; 11:36. This line of temptation is not a far cry from the serpent’s promise in the garden where he audaciously manipulates God’s law (Gen. 3:1, 4–5). Recall that the devil even “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14), who often imitates God in assaulting the covenant community (see also Rev. 6:2). At the wilderness temptation, then, Satan once again cloaks himself in divine garb and attempts to deceive not just the children of God but *the* Son of God. Ever since the garden, humanity has succumbed to Satan’s lies and deceit, but here in the wilderness temptation he will not succeed.

Third, the son of man’s success in Daniel 7 earns him the right to possess all dominion. The book of Daniel *may* have in mind the son of man’s authority not only over physical rulers but also spiritual rulers. According to Daniel 10, the angel Gabriel informs Daniel that the “prince of the kingdom of Persia” fought against the archangel Michael (Dan. 10:13). A few verses later, Gabriel goes on to state that he will

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Rev. 12:3, Satan (the red dragon) possesses ten horns and seven crowns—a clear sign of his authority to rule over the spiritual and physical domains.

<sup>9</sup> In commenting on Luke 4:6, Robert Stein agrees: “God has placed this world’s kingdoms under the devil’s temporary rule. God is clearly sovereign, but within his permissive will the devil is temporarily given this authority. This statement explains why the next one is true” (*Luke*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 147).

“fight against *the prince* [*archontos* (LXX-Theo)] of Persia” and that the “*prince* [*ho archōn* (LXX-Theo)] of Greece will come” (Dan. 10:20). These spiritual or heavenly “princes” (*hai archai*) appear to possess some authority over their corresponding earthly kingdoms (Persia and Greece). Daniel 7:14 in the Theodotion recension states, “And to him [the son of man] was given *the dominion* [*hē archē*] and the honor and the kingship” (NETS). The point is that perhaps the son of man’s authority extends beyond the earthly kingdom reaching into the spiritual realm.<sup>10</sup> The physical and the spiritual kingdoms are inseparable.

While it may appear that I am leaning too hard on Daniel 7 and grasping at intertextual straws, Jesus’s ministry in Luke (and the other three Gospels) makes good sense in light of these connections. While Daniel 7 is certainly one of the most difficult passages in all of Scripture, there’s little doubt that the passage is absolutely formative to the Evangelists’ depiction of Jesus in the Gospels. Daniel 7 must be understood in light of the book of Daniel as a whole. *If* Daniel 7 informs Luke’s account of the wilderness temptation, then we must grapple with his larger point: Jesus’s success against the wiles of the devil earns him the right to rule over earthly and spiritual realities. Such a suggestion makes wonderful sense as we move forward in Luke’s narrative, as Jesus relentlessly casts out demons and affirms his Danielic “authority” over them (Luke 4:31–37, 41; 8:26–39; 9:1).

### **The Transfiguration and the Son of Man as the Ancient of Days (9:28–36)**

The transfiguration, an event that all three Synoptics record (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36), continues to narrate Jesus’s rule as the Son of Man. While many commentators tend to read the transfiguration in isolation, untethered from Jesus’s faithfulness in the wilderness temptation, we must read the two events together. The transfiguration adds yet another layer to his identity as the Son of Man. In Luke 4, the

<sup>10</sup> See the discussion in G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 154.