

Today I'm going to tell you the story that was the basis of FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY's story 'THE GRAND INQUISITOR', which appears in his book 'THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV'. The story is from the life of JESUS.

The story of the life of Jesus is told in four books in THE BIBLE. These books are called GOSPELS, and they were written by MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE and JOHN. Matthew and John were two of the 12 closest followers of Jesus, known as APOSTLES. No one really knows who Mark was, but I think he was a child who hung around with Jesus and the twelve apostles, and when he got older he wrote his memories of Jesus's story. Luke was like a journalist. He became a Christian in the early days of the Christian Church, and was a good friend of SAINT PAUL, who helped to tell everyone outside Israel about Jesus and who He was. He got to interview loads of people who had known Jesus, and wrote their memories up in his Gospel, as well as writing THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, about the first few years of the Christian Church.

This story is from the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke (book 4 in both cases), and it goes something like this:

### THE TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT

Jesus came down from Heaven to call people to come back to God, and re-establish the connection that ADAM AND EVE (June 28) had had with God, and which Adam and Eve had lost by disobeying God. But He spent the first 30 years of his life with his mother MARY, and her husband JOSEPH (who died when Jesus was about 25), learning how to become a carpenter from Joseph. But eventually the time came for Jesus to begin His mission to bring people back to God. But before He began that mission, He went into the desert for forty days, without any food and water, to get ready for everything he was going to have to do.



And while Jesus was in the desert, He was visited by SATAN - the one-time angel who had fallen from Heaven because he couldn't accept that the angels would have to share God's love with human beings, and who had tried to get his revenge by tempting Adam and Eve into rebelling against God. Satan knew that God would come down from Heaven one day in human form to try to re-establish the connection with humanity that Adam and Eve, but he couldn't be sure when this would happen, or who God would be when He came down from Heaven. But Satan had heard lots of things about this man, Jesus - about how strange signs had accompanied his birth, and how he had been visited by three kings - and had kept an eye on him.

But he was confused by the fact that Jesus had just stayed at home for 30 years - if he was the Son of God, surely he would have been out and about by now, telling people to repent and come back to God? When he saw Jesus going out into the desert - something that holy people

often did, to try to get closer to God - Satan decided to approach him, and see if he could tempt him into rebelling against God. If he could, then that would show Jesus wasn't God - but at least he would have turned a holy man bad, so not a bad day's work. And if he couldn't, then that would show this Jesus probably was the Son of God, and would need to be dealt with properly.

So Satan approached Jesus. By this time, Jesus was very hungry and very thirsty. So Satan started tempting Jesus by saying 'If you are the Son of God, why don't you turn these stones into bread? And then you can something to eat.' But Jesus said to Satan, 'Man does not live

by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' So Satan tried again. He took Jesus up to the top of the highest point of the Temple in Jerusalem, and said to Jesus, 'If you are the Son of God, why don't you jump? Surely you won't come to any harm - God has promised that the angels will come and catch you and carry you down to the ground. And everyone down below will see you being



carried by angels and they will believe in you and do whatever you want.' But Jesus refused, saying 'It's wrong to put yourself in harm's way to test God, to see whether He will look after you. You should just have faith that God will look after you, without making Him pass a lot of tests firsts to convince you that He will.'

So Satan tried to tempt Jesus for a third and final time. This time he used the temptation that had worked on Adam and Eve - the promise that they would become like gods if they did what Satan told them to do. Satan took Jesus up to the top of a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their splendour. And Satan said to Jesus, 'I am the Prince of the World - all this belonged to Adam and Eve, but it became mine when they decided that they would rather listen to me than to God. I will give all of this up, and give it to you, if you do one thing: bow down and worship me. What was Adam and Eve's, and is now mine, will become yours, if you do that one thing - just bow down and worship me.' Even the thought of doing this made Jesus sick to his stomach, and angered him greatly. He turned with full force on Satan and said, 'Get away from me, Satan! You know the law - Worship GOD, and serve HIM only!' And Satan got very scared, because Jesus' words reminded him of the time, millions of years ago when he had been thrown out of Heaven because he had refused to obey that basic law of nature.

Satan now knew who he was dealing with, and he went away, planning to come back later. He would come back when Jesus had got a lot of enemies who would like to kill Him (because obviously, the world being as wicked as it is, a good man will soon have enemies who want to kill him), and he would tempt Jesus again, into giving up on trying to get human beings to come back to God.

## THE GRAND INQUISITOR

So that's the story which inspired Dostoevsky's story 'The Grand Inquisitor'. That story imagines that Jesus has come back to Earth, this time to Spain just before 1500. Jesus has been locked up (because obviously, the world being as wicked as it is, if Jesus did come back to Earth, He would be locked up very quickly) and the head of the Church in Spain - the Grand Inquisitor - comes to visit him. But he hasn't come to visit to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him - he has come to tell Jesus that He is bad for human beings and that He shouldn't interfere with the Church giving human beings what they need.

The Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus that He is bad for human beings because what He wants is for human beings to have free will - to choose to love God and live with Him. But free will is not what human beings need. What they need is the three things Jesus rejected in the desert, when he was tempted by Satan. What they need first is bread - and by bread we mean luxury and comfort and all things nice and nothing hard and nothing difficult. And the Church will give people bread. What people need second is miracles to force them to believe in the Church and do what the Church tells them to do. And the Church will give them miracles to make



them believe in the Church and obey. And finally, what they need is for the Church to be in control of the whole world so that it can give people bread and miracles. And for the Church to be in control, it has to make a pact with the Prince of the World, where the Church gets control of everything that the Prince of the World controls, and in return it bows down and worships Satan.

So, the Grand Inquisitor explains, nobody needs Jesus anymore - people are being looked after very well as it is by the Church, and He has nothing to offer. Jesus says nothing, but when the Grand Inquisitor has finished, he gets up, kisses the Grand Inquisitor and walks out of the prison. The kiss stirs something deep in the Grand Inquisitor - some idea that there is more to life than security and comfort - but he dismisses it, and continues to believe that the world has outgrown Jesus and the Church has a much better idea of what's good for human beings than Jesus ever did.

So that's the story of 'The Grand Inquisitor', which you may read in full one day, when you are a lot older. Although it's supposed to be an attack on what the Church has become (and the story is told by Ivan Karamazov, who doesn't like what the Church has become), if you substitute 'government' for the Church, it's still a highly relevant story for the times we live in.