

Study 3: Luke 3:21-23: 4:1-30

In these chapters Jesus arrives fully on the scene yet in some ways they are still form part of Luke's prologue. John's ministry has been showing people that they were sinful and needed to repent whilst telling them that someone was coming who would be able to transform them by God's Spirit. Jesus is indeed the one that John described; this is confirmed by God's amazing declaration at Jesus' baptism that reveals his identity and commission which is repeated by Jesus himself as he sets out his manifesto in Nazareth. However a new tone emerges as Satan seeks to tempt Jesus away from his mission. Conflict begins and this continues to be the backdrop of the whole of Jesus' life. From the beginning of Jesus's ministry the devil is there and very quickly people are so offended by him that they want to kill him but Jesus never fails, he remains the perfect son of Adam, the son of God.

Background bits

Old Testament language and ideas

The Baptism

- *You are my Son*

God has promised that he would send a king who would be his son, 2 Sam 7:14 and this figure is spoken about in many places in the Old Testament. These words come directly from Psalm 2:7. This is a declaration that Jesus is the one who will rule the nations even though they take their stand against him. The Psalm describes a powerful, mighty ruler who will judge rebellion; the psalmist advises that people should fear the Lord, serve him, bow down to him but not run from him for 'blessed are all who take refuge in him.' There is a great contrast here: this king is a mighty figure who will crush those who oppose him but and bless those who come to him.

- *With you I am well pleased*

This is an indirect quote from Isaiah 42:1 that links Jesus with the servant figure from Isaiah. This is a very different picture from the victorious king in Psalm 2. He will be 'a bruised reed' and 'a smouldering wick'. This servant may look weak at times but he will be humble and just. He will experience suffering but he will not falter or be discouraged. He will achieve his purpose and establish justice on earth. He will be a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles. He will bring sight for the blind and freedom to those who sit in darkness ideas Jesus himself picks up on later.

The Temptation

This is not about the temptation we face; the subject in view is Jesus. This is written so that we have confidence in Jesus. He is the one that has the victory. Jesus stands in a way that no human has ever stood before; he shows that he is the perfect man, the true Israel, the sinless king. At his baptism Jesus is established as God's King, the servant who is

fully human who will have to follow the path of suffering and each of these things are tested by the devil. The 40 days in the wilderness are symbolic of Israel's time in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34).

If you are the Son of God

This directly disputes what God has said at Jesus' baptism (Lk. 3:22). It challenges the truth of God's word just as the serpent did in Genesis 3:1. Jesus replies by quoting **Deut 8:3**. He links himself with the history of Israel in the wilderness and shows himself to be totally dependent on God and His words of promise unlike both Israel and Adam who failed.

I will give you the kingdoms

Jesus will not bow to Satan, He will only worship God the Father, he will perfectly keep God's law **Deut. 6:13**. Israel had been told they should not follow other gods but they failed time after time. Jesus will go God's way and be God's servant even though that will mean a life of suffering and eventually death. He will not claim the power that was rightly his before he fulfils his mission (Philippians 2:6-8).

If you are the Son of God

In the final temptation the devil twists scripture, Psalm 91:11,12. Jesus replies clearly that he would not test God's provision for him. He quotes **Deut 6:16** which remembers how Israel at Massah (Ex 17:7) grumbled and did not trust that God would provide for them. Israel tested God but Jesus would not test God's provision for him; however this provision is provided in only a few verses time when he walks away unharmed at Nazareth (Luke 4:28-30)

Jesus shows that he is not like Adam or Eve; He does not fail like Israel – He is the perfect Son who will go the way that God has called him. He will continue in this faithfulness even to death on the cross (Luke 23:35-39).

Jesus' manifesto – Isaiah 61

Jesus began to teach in Galilee and when he went to Nazareth he very deliberately chose to read from Isaiah 61. As he read this he was proclaiming to his hometown exactly how he understood himself and his mission.

At his baptism Luke has shown how the Spirit had anointed Jesus. Jesus is this figure from Isaiah. This section in Isaiah shows that Jesus had come to preach good news to the poor. It is crucial we understand who these poor are. The word for 'poor' (also translated as humble) in Isaiah 61:1 is used 4 times in Isaiah to describe the people of God suffering at the hands of God's enemies. The poor are the captives taken by the Babylonians; they are God's people under God's judgement separated from God's place (Isaiah 29:19). Under God's judgement the people of Judah were left with nothing as Isaiah warned Hezekiah (39:5-7) but there is a promise that one day there will be a restoration with pardoning and payment for sin (40:1-2). Jesus has not just come for the materially poor he has come to rescue those who have rebelled against him. We are the poor who Jesus

has come to save. The situation of Israel in the exile is a picture of the reality of the whole world which has rebelled against God and is facing the wrath of God (Romans 1:18-21). The poor are those who God has been standing against because of their rejection of Him not only the materially hard up but also primarily the spiritually impoverished under the judgement of God.

Jesus came to bring freedom but he did not engage in freeing the Jews from Roman rule; he did not even rescue John the Baptist from prison. The freedom he brought was far greater; a freedom and rescue from the judgement of God. All men under Gods judgement are enslaved to the world, the flesh and the devil. We are prisoners of sin until Christ rescues us (Romans 6:16-23).

The blind in Isaiah are those spiritually blinded by God (Isaiah 6:10, 29:10). In Isaiah God had removed his rebellious people from his truth or word. Humankind without someone to speak God's word to them are blind. Jesus came to show us that we are blind (John 9:39-41). When he came he brought a light of revelation even for the gentiles that they too might see God (Luke 2:32).

The means of bringing this rescue is not yet fully clear in Luke but this manifesto emphasizes that Jesus preaching and proclaiming it will bring the rescue. Jesus came to preach good news, his priority was to proclaim the gospel.

Notice where Jesus chooses to finish reading; it is a deliberate decision by Jesus to end the quote here because now is a period of God's favour. In the preaching of the gospel there is an offer of restoration before the day of vengeance comes. This still applies today, now is the day of God's favour, now there is an opportunity to repent and believe the good news but one day a time will come when it is too late.

Difficult Bits

Why does Jesus get baptized?

Jesus' baptism was not a baptism of repentance but a great commission from God the father and God the Spirit. His baptism marks the beginning of his ministry and establishes that Jesus is God's man. This was a public event in which Jesus receives a both a visual and verbal declaration about who he was and what he had come to do. In these declarations Jesus is seen as the all-powerful king who will judge, who will save and who will suffer.

Why the genealogy now?

Whereas Matthew traces Jesus' lineage from Abraham to emphasize Jesus' Jewish heritage Luke traces it back to Adam to show That Jesus is the fulfilment of the hopes of all people. Placed between his baptism and temptation this genealogy is reinforces that Jesus is the perfect man, the second Adam who does fall when tempted. It is because of this that he was able to become the perfect substitutionary sacrifice for us (1 Peter 2:22-24, Hebrews 2:14-18).

Why are the genealogies different?

There is much written about the differences between Matthew and Luke's genealogies. One explanation is that Matthew traces back the royal succession (moving from David to Solomon; Matt.1: 6) while Luke traces Joseph's actual physical descent (moving from David to Nathan, a little-known son mentioned in 2 Sam.5: 14). Another explanation may be found in the practice of Levirate marriage in which a woman marries another family member on the death of her husband to continue his physical line of descent in which case Matthew's record traces Joseph's mother's living husband back (Jacob) and Luke's record traces Joseph's mother's deceased husband back (Heli). The key point Jesus is properly connected royally, humanly, and divinely

What offends the people at Nazareth?

They seem at first to be excited but then very quickly start to think, "hang on just who does he think he is?" Jesus knows what they are thinking and confronts them with it. He chooses two stories which exposes their hearts. In the first story Elijah was running for his life because of the godlessness in Israel – in many ways he was forced from his home because of the rebellion that was there. He went to a poor widow outside of Israel. The story of Naaman is the story of a rich man who knew he needed help and turned to the God of Israel. Both these figures were gentiles materially in very different positions but both acknowledged their helplessness. Jesus has come for such as these. The people in Nazareth knew he was speaking against them and they resented the grace given to others that they despised.

Reading this with a seeker

There are so many ideas in these stories that it is hard to know where to start! Jesus is God's great king who has come to rescue by being the Suffering Servant. He never fails when tempted unlike us who are trapped and imprisoned by our sin. He came to preach good news of a rescue for those who see their need.

There is a hard punch line in these stories. Jesus never went back to Nazareth. They rejected him and Jesus left. We need to listen to Christ today. There will be a time when the year of the Lord's favour comes to an end and the day of Judgement is here.

We should also be confident when reading this with others. Jesus was going to achieve the most amazing rescue by preaching the gospel. We are called to continue that task, some will reject it but others will be set free from sin and death because of it. We just need to be faithful in our task; the gospel is powerful (Romans 1:16).