

Son of God

Luke: Certainty of the Truth

Luke 3:21-4:13

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Representative Government

Right now the news is dominated by politics. I'm not a political analyst by any means, but I've made one simple observation over the course of my life. Nobody's ever completely satisfied with the people in political office *or* the candidates. This has been intensified in recent months. It seems that most of the talk is about how bad *that* candidate is, not about how good *this* candidate is. Why are we so dissatisfied with politicians and government? Again, I'm no expert, but I think I know at least one reason. Our politicians are supposed to represent the people. They're supposed to represent the people's beliefs and values. And to make decisions that are in the best interests of the people. But no politician ever represents the people perfectly. Some of that's because the values of the people are so varied. But a lot has to do with the fact that many politicians seem to operate within their own self-interests instead of in the interests of the people. And that reveals the root of the problem.

Politicians should not only represent their constituents; they should also represent God. The fact that humans have been given authority and dominion at all is grounded in the fact that they are created in the image of God. Therefore, as God's image bearers, everybody who's given the responsibility of governing should represent God well; they should reflect his character. They should rule with justice, integrity, and faithfulness, and they should do everything with the interests of others in mind. But because they're sinners, they don't. They don't represent God or man well. And until Christ returns, they won't do it perfectly. We'll always be dissatisfied with human leaders. We're called to honor and submit to them. We're called to pray for them. But we aren't called to put our trust in them.

As we will learn in our passage this morning, Jesus Christ is the only man who ever perfectly represented God and man. He is our king. And our salvation is found in him alone.

Our text this morning covers Luke 3:21-4:13. There are three sections in this text: Jesus' baptism, genealogy, and temptation. You may be wondering why I'm preaching one sermon on three passages. Well I'm convinced that all three passages are meant to be handled together as one. The main thing that leads me to that conclusion is the repeated phrase "Son of God." In 3:22, following Jesus' baptism, God says to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." In 3:38, at the end of the genealogy, we learn that Jesus is "the son of Adam, the son of God." In 4:3, Satan says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Luke put these three sections together to teach us what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God and to show us why Jesus must be the Son of God. Keep that in mind as we read. I'm going to read all of the first and the third section. But I'm only going to read part of the genealogy.

Luke 3:21-4:13¹

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

¹ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

²³Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

[Skip to verse 38.]

³⁸the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

^{4:1} And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.”

⁹And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,’

¹¹and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Like I said before we read the passage, these three sections are held together by the phrase “son of God.” So to begin our time this morning, I want to answer two questions: what does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God and why does it matter? After that, I want to show you how Jesus is seen as the Son of God in this passage. Finally, we’ll consider some applications for us.

JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

Let’s start with what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God and why it matters.

Ontological and Functional Sonship

To be the son of someone can refer to a family relationship between a father and a son. Abe is my son physically, biologically. He is the son of Josh. That’s why you have last names like Johnson. Originally that meant “the son of John.” But in the Bible the words “son of” don’t have to refer to a biological relationship. The phrase can also refer to a relationship of similarity;² a relationship of representation. For example, in John, when Jesus is arguing with the religious leaders, they say to

² Chester, Tim. “[Review: Carson on the Son of God.](#)” Blog post, Tim Chester, August 10, 2013.

him, “Abraham is our father.” And Jesus says back to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did...” (8:39). Jesus goes on to say, “You are of your father the devil...He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth...” (8:44). Here Jesus connects sonship with what a person does, not where they come from physically. Satan is a liar and a murderer. And since they’re trying to kill him and not telling the truth; they must be sons of Satan! They’re similar to Satan. They’re representing Satan.

In our passage this morning, Adam is called the son of God, at least in part, because he was created in God’s image. He is created in God’s like-ness. He’s similar to God in a number of ways. And he’s meant to represent God in the world. So which of these ideas are in view when the Bible refers to Jesus as the Son of God? Well, it just depends on the passage. On the one hand, Jesus is the Son of God in that he is one with the Father (Jn. 10:30). He’s one in essence with the Father. He isn’t the Son of God like human sons, because he was always one with the Father. He is the eternal Son of God; begotten, not made. Gabriel drew this aspect of Jesus’ sonship out when he announced Jesus’ birth to Mary. Mary asks the angel how she will conceive and bear a son, since she is a virgin. And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God...” (Lk. 1:35). So Jesus is the Son of God in that he is God. He is of the same nature and substance with God the Father.

But the three references to Jesus being the Son of God in our passage do not refer to Jesus’ deity; they actually refer to his humanity. They refer to him representing God as a man. He perfectly fulfills the role of man to be like God. So, not only is Jesus the Son of God in that he is fully God. He’s also the Son of God in that he’s fully man. And in his humanity, he’s the first human being to represent God perfectly as a son of God.

The Perfect Sacrifice for Our Sins

And why does this matter? Well as our Statement of Faith goes on to say, “We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed his blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins.” Jesus paid the price for the sins of man. In order to be *capable* of doing this, he had to be God. But in order for him to be *qualified* to do this, he had to be man.³ And not just man. He had to be a perfect man, without sin. God requires a spotless sacrifice for sin. His sinless humanity made him the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. If he wasn’t a sinless man, he wouldn’t be qualified to pay for our sins. Before Jesus begins his ministry that leads to a cross, Luke wants us to know that Jesus was fully man and he perfectly represented God and man through his sinless life.

JESUS REPRESENTS GOD AND MAN.

Let’s now consider how Jesus is the perfect and human Son of God in the three passages before us. We’ll see four ways Jesus represents God and man perfectly.

Baptism (3:21)

First, Jesus represents God and man through his baptism. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, but Jesus didn’t need to repent. Jeff Warren reminded me of a great quote last week. Jesus is a perfect example for us in all things, except repentance. Jesus never repented because he

³ Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1994.

never needed to repent. Jesus was without sin. That's why, in Matthew, John the Baptist tries to prevent Jesus from being baptized (3:14). So why was Jesus baptized? At a minimum, it was to identify with sinful humanity.⁴ He wasn't baptized because he needed to repent of *his* sins. But, in order to pay the penalty for *our* sins, he needed to identify with sinful humanity. His baptism was one way to do that. He represented God in that he was without sin. He represented man through his baptism.

Kingship (3:22)

Second, Jesus represents God and man through his kingship. After Jesus' baptism, the Father says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." This is a reference to Psalm 2 (cf. Isa. 42) where God calls David his Son. In that passage, we're reminded of the covenant God made with David in 2 Samuel 7. God promised that his offspring would always be on the throne and his kingdom would spread to the ends of the earth. God promised that even if his offspring failed to be faithful to God that God would not go back on his Word. He would discipline their unfaithfulness, but David's line would continue. The Davidic king was called to represent God and to represent the people. The success of the people was dependent on the success of the Davidic king (cf. Ps. 20). The other kings failed. But Jesus didn't fail. The other kings were removed from their throne. But Jesus is king forever! He perfectly represents God in the way he rules with justice, integrity, and faithfulness.⁵ And he perfectly represents man in the way that he acts for their interests, not his own. That's why his Father is well pleased with him!

Genealogy (3:23-38)

Third, Jesus represents God and man through his genealogy. There are two genealogies in the Gospels. The first is in Matthew. The second is here in Luke 3:23-38. The genealogies are different. And these differences have led to a lot of debate. I don't want to get bogged down in the debate this morning. If you would like to read more on the debate, I'll list some resources in the written version of this sermon that we post on the website.⁶ This morning, I simply want to draw out one difference between Matthew and Luke and explain the significance of it.

Matthew's genealogy only goes back to Abraham. But Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam. What is the significance of this? Matthew wants to show us that Jesus is the son of Abraham and the son of David. God promised that through Abraham's offspring all the nations would be blessed. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. God promised that through David's offspring there would be an eternal king. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise too. Luke wants us to see these truths. But he also wants us to see another truth.

Jesus is also the son of Adam, the son of God. There are two significant points to this difference. First of all, the salvation that God brings through Jesus is not just for Israel. It is for all flesh, all peoples, and all nations. In Acts 17, Paul says, "[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth..." Jesus comes from this one man. Jesus is fully man. And he came to save all the nations that come from this one man. The second point of significance is that Adam was called to bear the image and likeness of God. He was a son of God. Adam failed in this calling. But Jesus didn't. The first genealogy we have in Scripture is in Genesis 5. It shows the consequences

⁴ Bock, Darrell L. *Luke Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*. Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1994.

⁵ Carson, D. A. "[Who is This "Son of God"?](#)" Article, Christianity.com.

⁶ Bock, Darrell L. *Luke*. The NIV application commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1996; Hughes, R. Kent. *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1998.

of Adam's failure to represent God and man. Everybody that was born after Adam died. Adam died as a consequence of his failure to perfectly represent God. And because Adam was also the representative head of all humanity after him, all who came after him died as well. But God promised that through the offspring of Adam and Eve, one day a Savior would come who would deal with sin and Satan and death. Jesus is that man. Adam failed. But Jesus didn't. And just as sin and death spread to the whole human race through the one man Adam, so now forgiveness and life is spread to all who belong to Jesus. Jesus is the perfect representative of God and man. That's the significance of the genealogy.

Temptation (4:1-13)

But the parallels between Jesus and Adam don't stop at the genealogy. They continue on into the temptation in chapter 4. Jesus is the perfect representative of God through his temptation. It's not a coincidence that Jesus is called the son of Adam, the son of God, at the *end* of chapter 3, and then we hear about his temptation at the *beginning* of chapter 4. This was the same sequence with Adam. In Genesis, right after we learn that Adam was created in the God's image, as God's son, we learn about his temptation. In his temptation by Satan, Adam fails. How does Jesus, the new Adam, hold up under this temptation?

First of all notice the parallels between Adam's temptation and Jesus' temptation.⁷ Both were tempted by food. Adam was tempted with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Jesus was tempted with bread when he was hungry. Adam fell to temptation. Jesus stood firm. Both were tempted with power. Adam had already been given dominion over the earth. But he was tempted to have more power—the ability to determine what was good and evil. Jesus too was tempted with power. Through God's plan, he would be given reign over all the earth. But that would only come after the cross. Satan tempted him to take all of the kingdoms of the earth before the cross. Adam fell. Jesus stood firm. Both were tempted to test God regarding life and death. Adam was tempted to test God's warning that he would surely die if he disobeyed God's Word. Jesus was tempted to test God with his life by throwing himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Adam fell. Jesus stood firm. Jesus is the perfect representative of God in that he didn't sin. Therefore, Jesus can stand as the representative of man.

Another parallel between Adam's and Jesus' temptation has to do with the Word of God. If Satan is good at anything, he's good at twisting the word of God. He twisted God's word of judgment with Eve. God said that Adam and Eve would die if they disobeyed God's Word. Satan says, "You will not surely die." At that moment, Adam should have spoken the true Word of God. After all, God gave his Word to Adam. But Adam remained silent. Satan also twisted the Word of God to Jesus. But Jesus did what Adam failed to do. He gave the true intention of God's Word back to Satan on three occasions.

Maybe the most important contrast between Adam and Jesus has to do with their motivation. Adam acted in self-interest. Jesus sought to obey God and to put aside his self-interest. He didn't think about his own comfort, he didn't think about securing power. He chose suffering and obedience to God. Therefore, he's qualified to offer a perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. Adam's fall to temptation in paradise led to his banishment in the wilderness. Jesus' stand against temptation in the wilderness has made the way for us to enter paradise.

⁷ Garland, David E. *Luke*. Zondervan exegetical commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2011.

Representative First, Example Second

Most people use Luke 4 as an *example* of how we should avoid temptation. And let there be no mistake—Jesus is our example; we’re called to follow him as his disciples. But following Jesus’ example is *not* how we obtain the salvation of God. It’s through Jesus himself that we obtain salvation. Jesus is our representative and our substitute, first and foremost. That’s the main point of this passage! Jesus was fully God and fully man. And as a man, he was without sin. That’s what makes him qualified to be our perfect, all sufficient sacrifice. That’s the point of this passage.

But there are still applications for us in this passage about how to deal with temptation. But these applications flow out of the theology of the passage. We don’t resist temptation to become saved. We resist temptation because Jesus saves us and now calls us to follow him. And even then, we need Jesus’ help with temptation, not just his example! This is the order the book of Hebrews deals with temptation. I’d like to read a couple of sections of Hebrews to illustrate and motivate!

Hebrews 2:14–18

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery...¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:14–16

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE.

And so, with that said, I would like to consider the example of Jesus. Let’s consider a few applications about how we can deal with temptation in our own lives.

Jesus’ example teaches us to resist temptation with the Word and prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit. We’ve already seen that Jesus resisted temptation by countering Satan’s lies with the truth of God’s Word. So I won’t say much about that, except that we’re called to do the same. We also learn in this passage about the importance of prayer. In Luke’s account of the baptism, we see that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus while he was praying. And it was only after he prays that the Father reveals that Jesus is the Son of God. This is unique in Luke. Luke wants us to see how important prayer was in the life of Jesus. But he also wants us to see how important prayer is in our own lives. When we pray, we invite the Holy Spirit to work in and through us.

And that brings me to the third thing we learn about resisting temptation. The Holy Spirit came on Jesus at his baptism, after he prayed. This was God’s way of showing that Jesus’ mission would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is a theme that runs throughout Luke-Acts. Some would say that the book of Acts should be titled the Acts of the Holy Spirit, instead of the Acts of the Apostles. God’s mission advances from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth as the Word and Spirit move. We also see that the Holy Spirit leads Jesus when he’s in the wilderness. This lesson is important for us as well. We too must be led by and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We can't follow Jesus and glorify God without the Word, prayer, and the power of the Spirit. We can't advance his mission without the Word, prayer, and the power of the Spirit. And we certainly can't resist temptation without the Word, prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We're called to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. We're called to resist the devil with the sword of the Spirit. This means that we're called to do everything in our power to resist the devil, but we can't do it without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus perfectly represented God and man. Because of Jesus, and through the Spirit, we too are called to represent God in the world. We're called to be disciples of Jesus Christ who glorify God.

Son of god, the. (ho huios theou): 1. Use of Title in the Synoptists.Â Indeed, it is the Son of God, as He appears in this final scene in the First Gospel, who dominates the rest of the New Testament. Thus, in Acts 9:20 , the beginning of Paul's testimony as a Christian is given in these words, "And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God"; and what this meant to Paul may be gathered from his own statement in the opening of Romans, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle