

The credentials of Jesus

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[0 : 00] First reading is from the book of Psalms, page 537, and Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart, and cast away their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king of Zion, my holy hill.

I will tell of the decree the Lord said to me. You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

[1 : 11] Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven, Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age, being the son, as was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Mathat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janai, the son of Dvanri, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Ehbe, the son of Canai, the son of Eli, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Simeon, the son of Josic, the son of Jodah, the son of Ioannan, the son of Rasa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Nerai, the son of Melkai, the son of Adai, the son of Kosam, the son of El-Madam, the son of Ur, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jurim, the son of Mathat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Malaya, the son of Mena, the son of Matatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salah, the son of Narshon, the son of Aminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arnai, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Ru, the son of Peleg, the son of Eba, the son of Shelah, the son of Canaan, the son of Parphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah the son of Enoch the son of Jared the son of Mahalalel the son of Canaan the son of Enos the son of Seth the son of Adam the son of God

Heavenly Father thank you very much that this genealogy reminds us that you are indeed the Lord of history thank you that your word stands across all of history and we pray therefore please would you help us now to give ourselves to understand your words we pray that your Holy Spirit would enable us to do that that we might be transformed in hearts and minds for Jesus sake Amen I gather for the last few months commuters in West London have been baffled by the appearance of a 5 foot 7 inch tall white rabbit on the first day of each month it appears wearing a colorful striped scarf either standing or sitting on Barnes Bridge waving at passengers driving past in their cars or at cyclists as they cycle past it even has its own

Facebook page in which I gather the white rabbit explains that its aim is simply to be present just to be no more but I guess that describes how most people think of God a God who is simply present a God who is simply a divine being and no more in a rather vague and distant kind of way and therefore it's not really surprising is it that many people consider that the claims that the New Testament makes for the person of Jesus Christ are completely overblown and exaggerated yes they may believe Jesus existed perhaps a religious teacher maybe even a prophet but anything beyond that is an exaggeration indeed it may well be that you're here this morning and actually that is your view of Jesus however it is a far cry from the claims that we've been seeing over these last few weeks that Luke makes for Jesus Christ in his eyewitness account we've seen the claims he makes are that Jesus is God himself he's God's eternal ruler and king he's come to bring

[6 : 39] God's salvation and the forgiveness of sins he is the saviour who is Christ the Lord and last week if you were here we saw John the Baptist proclaimed the arrival of Jesus as both saviour and as judge and calling people to repentance so I guess the issue it's one of credibility Donald Trump has promised to make America great again Theresa May has promised to make a success of Brexit will they or is it just overblown rhetoric are Luke's claims any different well that I think is why the passage we're looking at today is so important because here we hear the voice of God himself commissioning Jesus for the work he has come to do there's only one other occasion in the gospel accounts when we hear God himself speaking so today is the day to sit up and take notice look again at verse 21 of Luke chapter 3 if you close your Bible then page 1035

Luke 3 21 now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit ascended 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 now our whole focus this morning is really going to be on the end of verse 22 not really because I don't want to have to read those names again but actually because that I hope we're going to see is where the focus of the passage lies and in particular on the end of verse 22 you are my beloved son with whom with you I am well pleased which combined two quotations from two really significant Old Testament passages key of huge importance for our understanding of who Jesus is the first is from

Psalms 2 you are my beloved son the second from Isaiah 42 with you I am well pleased and we're simply going to look at each of those two in turn first of all Psalm 2 which shows us that Jesus is God's appointed son here is the baptism of Jesus he is baptized not of course because he needs to repent but rather because he comes to associate with those he has come to save the heavens open the spirit descends like a dove possibly an echo of the beginning of Genesis where you'll remember at the very beginning of the Bible we're told that the Holy Spirit hovers over the waters at the start of creation possibly to make the point that this moment the coming of Jesus into the world is an event as significant as creation itself but Luke's focus is not so much on the events but on the words verse 22 you are my beloved son son it's just more back in chapter 1 verse 35 you may remember the angel said to Mary the child to be born will be called holy the son of God

I hope as we've been going through Luke both in our growth groups on Sundays I hope we've been looking out for these connections because remember Luke tells us that he is writing an orderly account it's not random and then in verse 21 321 all the way through to chapter 4 verse 13 Luke's focus is on sonship so it's there in verse 22 we just read it the genealogy begins with sonship verse 23 Jesus when he began his ministry was about 30 years of age being the son as was supposed of Joseph son is the thing which is echoed all the way through the genealogy verse 38 the son of Enos the son of Seth the son of Adam the son of God and that then is how the devil addresses Jesus we'll see this again next week in chapter 4 verse 3 if you are the son of God and again verse 9 if you are the son of God but to see the full thoughts of the many of sonship we need to turn back to that first reading from psalm chapter 2 so please will you turn back to page 537 page 537 and we're going to spend some time in psalm 2 and I think especially important in the light of last week's service in

Glasgow Cathedral in which the sonship of Jesus was denied so actually today is a really good day isn't it to be looking together at psalm 2 which is the key place to go if you want to see what it means for Jesus to be the son now there are three voices in psalm 2 the first voice is the voice of the nations let me read verses 1 to 3 again why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords promise the rulers of the nations set themselves up not just against God but against his anointed can you begin to hear the echoes with Luke chapter 3 Herod's rejection remember last week of John the Baptist and the messenger of

[12 : 27] John the Baptist setting himself up against God followed by the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit but secondly there's the voice of God verse 4 he who sits in the heavens laughs the Lord holds them in derision then he'll speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury saying as for me I've set my king on Zion my holy hill please love and might into charging his father and tackling him.

But actually, of course, the whole thing looks rather silly and comical to anyone who is viewing what's going on because what chances a four-year-old have against a grown man?

Well, God's response to human rebellion is to appoint a king, verse 6. And then, verse 7, we have the voice of that king himself.

I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, to the king, that is, You are my son. Today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I'll make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise.

[14 : 09] Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.

For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. So can we see what is happening in Luke chapter 3?

What's the significance of Jesus being declared God's son? Well, it is the declaration, isn't it? That Jesus is God's appointed king, ruler, and judge.

It's no significance that throughout church history, these verses in Luke 3 have been of huge significance for understanding the nature of God because God here is being revealed, isn't it, in verses 21 and 22 as Trinity, the three persons of the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Now, of course, we can ask all sorts of questions which are difficult to get our minds around. How can there be one God with three persons and so on which are distinct? But here we clearly see, together, they are declaring the sonship of Jesus.

[15 : 27] In other words, you see, you and I are not to think that Jesus is the son equals Jesus smaller, weaker, less significant than the father.

No, instead think big, supersize. The son is the one who rules the nations. The ends of the earth belong to him.

He is God's appointed judge. He's the one before the truly wise person bows the knee and makes peace. The one in whom, wonderfully, there is refuge from the judgments to come.

Which means, crucially, of course, that Jesus can deliver. Remember what John the Baptist said in chapter 3, verse 16 of Jesus.

He said, he'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is both God's savior. He'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit and he is the judge with fire.

[16 : 26] Why don't you say, what qualifies him to do that? He's the son. Just as Donald Trump now has authority, all the authority of the presidential office, the commander-in-chief of the U.S. armed forces, the authority to make treaties with other nations, the authority to conduct U.S. foreign policy, to appoint federal judges, including to the U.S. Supreme Court, to appoint the head of the CIA, to manage national affairs and the priorities of the U.S. administration.

Why? Because he's now been declared to be U.S. president. Well, in a far greater way, Jesus the Son has been given the authority by God the Father as savior and judge.

Indeed, here are all three persons of the Trinity coming together at the beginning of Jesus' ministry to make the point that all three persons of the Trinity are committed to Jesus being both savior and judge.

Compared with the rich, of course, the commissioning of a U.S. president seems to pale into insignificance. Not, of course, that we should imagine that this is the moment when Jesus became the Son.

No, he's been Son from before all eternity. Rather, this is the public declaration that Jesus is, indeed, the Son of Psalm 2.

[18 : 02] Now, I think this is also part of the significance of the genealogy, so verses 23 to 38, which shows us, doesn't it, the whole focus of history focuses down on this one man.

So, you see, when you ask, from God's perspective, what is the focus of history? What's the main road of history? Why, it is leading up to the coming of this one man into the world.

As the genealogy traces Jesus' line all the way back to Adam, the first man. Because even then, at the beginning of creation, God knows the focal point of history is going to be the coming of Jesus into his world.

Remember, Luke wants us to have certainty. He wants us here to have certainty and confidence about who Jesus is. Certainty and confidence to have a big view of Jesus, not a small view of Jesus.

Not to treat Jesus lightly. And yet, how easily we do that. Perhaps we heard last week, the call to repent. And put our trust in Jesus for the first time.

[19 : 16] And perhaps actually we know we've done nothing about it. Or perhaps we heard last week about the need for ongoing repentance, to bear fruit. And again, we have done nothing about it.

Or perhaps we heard last week about the need to call others to repentance. repentance. And we have decided to do nothing about it and to leave that to others.

Or perhaps we're happy to say that yes, Jesus is judge and savior on a Sunday, but actually not really on a Monday or a Tuesday. Or to do so at church, but not really at work or with friends or with family or neighbors.

The danger of treating Jesus lightly. So firstly, Jesus is God's appointed son. Secondly, he is God's chosen servant.

And here we are again at the end of verse 22, that little phrase, with you I am well pleased. And as I said earlier, the key to this is again, looking back to the Old Testament, to look at another key Old Testament passage.

[20 : 25] So please will you turn to Isaiah chapter 42, page 728. And I'm going to read Isaiah 42, verses 1 to 4.

Behold, my servants, whom I uphold, my chosen, which by the way can equally well be translated, my beloved, in whom my soul delights.

I put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.

He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands wait for his law.

Now, Isaiah is important for Luke. We've already seen in Isaiah chapter 40, quoted in Luke chapter 3, God promises, my salvation is coming. I indeed am coming.

[21 : 31] As he provides an exact match, an exact payment for the sins of his people. And the second half of Isaiah in chapters 42 to 53 we're introduced to the figure of the servant who is going to deliver on God's salvation promise.

So four servant songs which spun out both his identity and the work he's going to do. Notice verse one, God will put his spirit upon him.

Just what we see at Jesus' baptism. What's he going to do, verse one, he's going to bring forth justice to the nations. Verse four, till he's established justice in the earth.

Now when Isaiah speaks about justice, it's slightly different from what I guess we might think of when we think of justice. He has a much kind of broader meaning of justice by which he really means he is going to silence false gods and establish the truth in the whole world that God indeed is God.

It's a way of saying he's going to put God's plans for his world into effect and make the truth about God known in all nations throughout all history.

[22 : 49] It's why God says to the servant figure in verse six, I am the Lord. I've called you in righteousness. I'll take you by the hand and keep you. I'll give you as a covenant for the people a light for the nations to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness and so on.

A light for the nations. Turn back to Luke. We've already seen, haven't we, Luke's concern for the nations.

Do you remember the words of Simeon? My eyes have seen your salvation that you prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles. and in Luke 3 in the genealogy, seems to me the main point of the genealogy is to make the point that Jesus come for all people.

You may know that Matthew in his gospel also has a genealogy. His is the other way around. It finishes with Jesus rather than starting with Jesus. But the main difference is that Matthew's genealogy only goes back as far as Abraham.

It seems that Matthew's interest is more in making the point that Jesus fulfills the promises that God made to Abraham. Whereas Luke goes back all the way to the first man, Adam, linking Jesus with the whole of the human race.

[24 : 20] Verse 38, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. my father did some research on his family tree when he retired with the help of a friend.

Disappointingly for me at least, it was all spectacularly unexciting as far as I could work out. He traced back his family roots to a small market town 300 years ago in Northamptonshire where even today I gather there's an extraordinarily high percentage of dowdies on the electoral register.

That's the place to go. They're all there. Now, my father was completely fascinated by this and I have reams of computer printouts stuffed away at home which he insisted I kept.

I, less fascinated and I imagine most of you in this reading this morning are completely uninterested and frankly I can't blame you. Why should you be interested? It's not your family tree.

It's my family tree. By contrast, you see, Luke is making a very powerful point that Jesus is connected, if you like, to the whole of humanity.

[25 : 33] Not just God of the Jewish people or as we might say, not just the God of those people who have some kind of Christian heritage but of the whole of humanity.

He's come for everyone. Now, that couldn't be more important, could it? in 2017. We live in a period of history where nationalism is increasing as nations assert themselves and as they assert their differences against one another.

In Europe, as tensions between different nations and cultures and races grows, as people seek to define themselves and defend themselves against others.

But Jesus comes as the son of Adam, the descendant and representative of all of humanity. And he came to do what no other human being has ever done, as we'll see next week, to defeat Satan, to bring victory over sin and death, and to bring to those who repent and believe in him the relationship with God that actually Adam had right at the very beginning in the garden.

all achieved through his suffering for our sin, just as the prophet Isaiah said, just as he said the servants would suffer.

[27 : 01] Now this is an enormous theme in Luke. Let me just get us to turn one final cross reference to the very end of Luke, Luke chapter 24, page 1067.

Now we keep turning to these verses at the end of Luke, because I think probably they are really the sort of key verses of the whole of Luke's gospel, which sum up for us Luke's message.

Luke 24, verse 46, well halfway through, well let's go back to verse 45. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, this is the risen Jesus speaking, and said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

We've seen some of the ingredients of this message before, haven't we? So thus it is written, the coming of Jesus is about the fulfillment of what's written in the Old Testament, that Christ should suffer and rise, well Luke's got much more to say about that as we go through Luke's gospel, repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed, it's what we've seen isn't it, in these opening chapters of Luke's gospel, that the heart of the Christian message, the heart of the message of Jesus, is repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and then should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you feel that God isn't very interested in you. Perhaps you feel that in some way because of your background or your culture or your upbringing that you are excluded.

[28 : 45] Perhaps you feel that at the very best you can only ever be a second class Christian. Or perhaps you have a colleague, a friend, a neighbor or someone at school, a friend, who their background is completely different, a completely different religious or cultural background.

The barriers to talking to them about Jesus Christ seem to be almost insurmountable, enormous. Where do I begin, you think to yourself? And of course you also then think, well, is it really worth it?

Of course it is. Because Jesus Christ is the descendant and representative of all humanity. The wonderful message of the forgiveness of sins is for all nations.

and you and I, of course, have the great privilege of living in this great city where people from all nations come and they flock here.

They are all around us, wonderfully. It's why the Grace Church mission statement is what it is. Do you know Grace Church has a mission statement? Do you know what the mission statement is?

[29 : 54] Anyone know what the mission statement is? Who wants to shout it out, the short version? Our overall purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Exactly. And it's deliberately broad. Our overall purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It's deliberately broad like that because Jesus came for all people.

He is both God's appointed son, the royal ruler, the one before everyone will bow, and he is the chosen servant who will bring salvation to all nations.

let's have a few moments of quiet. I'll then lead us in prayer, and we'll then have a question time if anyone wants to ask questions.

I think we've got time for questions. But first of all, a few moments of quiet. you are my beloved son with whom with you I am well pleased heavenly Father we praise you very much indeed that the Lord Jesus Christ is your appointed king your everlasting ruler the judge the one before whom everyone will have to bow the knee and we praise you too that he is the suffering servant the one who had died not for his own sins but the sin of many that he is the one who has come such that the message of the forgiveness of sins and salvation might be proclaimed to all nations forgive us heavenly Father when we have a small view of Jesus forgive us when we take him lightly thank you for the great certainty and confidence we can have reading Luke's gospel and we pray please that you would both humble us and grant us confidence and certainty about who Jesus is and why he came such that we might live for him and we ask it in his name

[32 : 07] Amen thank you for you thank you thank you thank you forable he is and here