

Revealing and Testing the Son

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[0 : 00] One of the things we're going to have to do is think about why this genealogy is here in the passage. And tonight we're going to see something that has never happened before in all of human history.

And I put that at the top of your handout, a unique moment in human history. And after we witness it, maybe we'll feel like giving another round of applause because we will have seen something unique and something truly heroic.

You see, in Luke's gospel, Jesus does many amazing things. But often we cannot relate to them. So when Jesus calms a storm, we don't think, Wow, Jesus, every time I try and tell a storm to quieten down, it never works.

You do it so much better than I do. You see, calming storms is just not the business we're in. Even more so when Jesus dies on a cross. We don't say, Wow, Jesus, I find it really difficult to die for the sins of the whole world.

You do it so much better than I do. You know, it's just not the game we're in, is it? But you see, the incredible heroics we're going to see in tonight's passage is something we can really connect with.

[1 : 09] It's something we're all too familiar with. Because we're going to see Jesus battling sin and temptation of the devil. We can connect with Jesus from a passage like this much more than from other parts of the Bible.

And so as we think about temptation this evening, my aim is not to unsettle us, but rather to give us total confidence as to why Christian salvation is secure.

I'm going to say that again. My aim is not to unsettle us, but to give us total confidence as to why Christian salvation is secure. So there's a handout there as well.

If you keep that open with your passage, that would really help me and help us as we work our way through. So point number one. You see, the first three chapters of Luke's gospel are like a string of movie previews.

They're three movie previews for a big main event. So chapter one is the announcement of Jesus, the first movie preview. Chapter two is the childhood of Jesus. And tonight, chapter three, or the third movie preview, is the baptism of Jesus.

[2 : 21] Now, I don't know about you, but when I see a movie preview of something I'm really looking forward to, like the latest Star Wars movie, I block off that date in the diary. I really cancel everything else, and then I go and ask my wife for permission to go and see it.

But, well, coming soon to a Middle Eastern village, it's the Lord. And you see, the remainder of chapter three, which our passage tonight is half of chapter three and some of chapter four, but the remainder of chapter three is the final piece to this final movie preview.

And then in chapter four, we're going to see the Lord Jesus in action. We're going to see the movie, so to speak. And so let's pick up the action of this movie preview, verse 21. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.

And as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, you are my son whom I love. With you, I'm well pleased.

You see, Jesus' baptism for me is a really confusing event, because Jesus didn't have any sin. He didn't have any old self that needed washing away.

[3 : 35] And so we have to ask ourselves, why did he need to be baptized in the first place? And I think Luke tells us why. You notice it says when all the peoples were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.

You see, he was baptized not because he was sinful, but to identify with sinful people. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And in this movie preview, Luke is creating a really important expectation for our film.

He's saying that while Jesus is special, he also relates fully to people as well. Fully God, but fully human too.

And humans get baptized. Notice that at Jesus' baptism, God is like a proud father at his son's university graduation. Yeah, that's my boy.

That's my son with whom I'm well pleased. Did your fathers do that to you at your university graduation? My brother did that to me at mine and it was really embarrassing. But actually, what is going on here is more than just embarrassing parent syndrome.

[4 : 47] Psalm 2, which is on our screen. Next one. Psalm 2. Psalm 2 shows us that God has a special king who is actually a son.

His son. See there. I will proclaim the Lord's decree. He said to me, you are my son. They're the same words that God says at Jesus' baptism. And this Psalm 2 son or this king will defeat God's enemies.

And he'll be given the ends of the earth. I will make all the nations your inheritance. The ends of the earth your possession. That's his, I guess his victory prize for defeating God's enemies.

Well, at Jesus' baptism, God uses these words from Psalm 2 and says, this is my son. This is my Psalm 2 king.

Thank you for that. And then Jesus' baptism is also an echo of our first reading, which is Isaiah 42. Isaiah 42, as Dietrich said, Isaiah 42 is a song and it forms part of an Old Testament album.

[5 : 54] Back in the day, it was number one, believe me. But this album is called The Servant Songs. And what this album is about, it tells us that God has a true servant who will serve his people by dying for their sins.

And you can see that same idea of God's delight. And this is my son. You can see that. Here is my son, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. The song there tells us that God will put his spirit on him.

And we see that at Jesus' baptism. The Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove. And so this third movie preview, you've got the Psalm 2 king, who is also the Isaiah 42 suffering servant.

He will crush God's enemies, but he will do it by dying for their sins. The son's pathway to global victory is through dying for the sins of God's people.

And what you have to do is read the rest of Luke's gospel to find out how he does that. But that is, I guess, the last of the three movie previews. And so I hope you're not like me.

[7 : 02] I hope you haven't eaten all your popcorn before the film starts. I hope you've left your choc-choc. Do you do that? Do you eat it all before you start? I do, because the ads take forever and things like that. Well, Luke, what he does here with the three chapters so far, he has fired up this crowd.

He's got us all really hyped with three movie previews. And we're ready for the thing to start. And then on to center stage comes someone from the records office.

Someone comes from births, deaths, and marriages. Just try saying that three times real fast, by the way. I struggle with it. And Luke puts this genealogy right here as we're ready for the action.

And so why does he do that? Because shouldn't he put it at chapter one like Matthew did? Why does he insert a genealogy, a list of names, not just to trip up David, but for us right here at the action?

And the answer is our second point on our handouts. You see, Jesus is not the first son of God that has ever been.

[8 : 03] So he's the unique son of God. He's part of the Trinity, sort of capital letters. But he isn't the first son of God, lowercase. You'll remember Adam.

Adam was also a son of God. And you can see that. Have a look down at our passage to the genealogy in verse 38. Just before chapter four, it says, The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

And the key to understanding this genealogy is Wimbledon and British men's tennis. Some of you know, my family and I used to live in London.

And in London, Wimbledon is a really huge deal. It's quite topical because we've got the Australian Open right now. Go Roger. But in England, there's this massive expectation and hype as to when is a British person going to win Wimbledon?

And every year, what the BBC does is the BBC shows, I guess, all the British players who get really close, but don't actually make it to the final.

[9 : 09] And so during the telecast, they'd show a montage of all these near enough players headed up by my favourite, Tim Henman. And it was only until Andy Murray came and won.

British Andy Murray, mind you. Well, anyway, that montage from the BBC is basically a list of failures. And that is exactly what this genealogy is as well.

It's a list of failures too. The big contrast is you have Jesus, the Psalm 2 king, the Isaiah 42 servant, God's special son on one side. And you've got Adam and all the sons of Adam on the other side.

Genesis 2 tells us that Adam had no human father, that he only had a heavenly father, that he was given the world to rule. But in Genesis 3, we all know what happens.

He failed to obey his father, didn't he? And he gave in to the devil's temptation. And so the search for a better son continued. Through the genealogy, through the generations.

[10 : 16] Will they be an obedient son of God? Or will they be a failure, like the first son, Adam? There are some familiar names in this genealogy. Verse 34, you have the son of Jacob, Isaac and Abraham.

So Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they're the fathers of Israel. And in the Old Testament, God actually calls Israel his son as well. And so Israel has a go at being the better son.

A better son than Adam, that is. But you'll remember from our Wednesday night Exodus studies that Israel were only out of Egypt for five minutes before they grumbled against God.

Well, they were sons of Adam. What do you expect? And actually, we have nothing to be smug about, do we? Because sadly, we all share this ugly family likeness.

And you could read this genealogy from bottom up and insert the line, loser. So Adam, a loser. Seth, a loser. Enosh, a loser.

[11:22] And so as Luke starts this movie, as the previews are done, he carefully inserts this genealogy to show or emphasize or hype up how much better this latest son of God has to be.

And so it raises the question, when anything is hyped up, like the promised land of the iPhone 7, like the president of the United States, or this latest son of God, will they live up to the hype, like the movie previews, or will they turn out to be just another disappointment?

And this moves us on to point three. And this battle between Jesus and the devil, it's a really curious, I guess, incident in the Bible.

And it's fought against the battleground of temptation. Now, just as a word, FYI, something only counts as a temptation if it is tempting.

That is, if it's properly seductive. So you could never come up to me and say, Vijay, would you like some cheesecake? Now, I like cake as much as the next person, but when you put cheese in it, that is an aberration of nature.

[12:37] So cheesecake has never touched my lips, never will. Not tempting. This goes doubly for me when you go to a pretentious cafe and they have avocados, but they call them avos, and they bash or crash or smash them.

Not tempting for me. Even in response to Devin's question, I would never eat a smashed avo, even if I was starving for 40 days. To work as a temptation, something has to be properly seductive.

It has to be an attractive prospect. Yeah, Jesus is God, but he's fully human too. Baptised like one of us. And as a human, as we're about to see, he was in a real battle to resist stuff that was properly seductive.

And if you're a Christian, this is where we most relate to Jesus, I think. So think of a time when you are tempted with something properly seductive. It could be a path of life you're tempted to go down.

It could be a habit or a thought pattern you are struggling to break. Or it could be just a daily battle of the Christian life.

[13:50] Well, turn up the intensity to 10. Have the devil giving it to you with both barrels for 40 days. No food alone. No Christian friends to help you.

No Facebook to receive encouraging messages from. And you're only beginning to get a glimpse of what Jesus went through in the wilderness. And so let's have a look at our first temptation.

Verse 3, chapter 4, verse 3. The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread. You see, it's not that the need for physical things is sinful.

It's not that food is wrong. It's not that turning a stone to bread is a sin. The point is that Jesus is not driven by physical urges.

He responds, verse 4, Man shall not live by bread alone. And here he's quoting Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy, God was trying to teach Israel that as you head towards the promised lands, they should listen to the Lord, not their stomach.

[14:58] That life comes from Yahweh. Remember, Israel constantly grumbled about physical needs, about food and about water, about protection. Well, in this first temptation, Jesus shows that he won't fail like Israel did.

If you are the Son of God, you can just make these stones bread. No worry. Snap your fingers. But actually, it's because he's the better Son of God that he won't.

And it's tempting when you read about things like he didn't eat for 40 days. It's tempting to think, well, that's really easy for Jesus. Because all he did was he flicked a switch and went from man Jesus to God Jesus.

And he just used some divine power just to survive without food for 40 days. I mean, we're told that he was filled with the Spirit, aren't we? But see, Luke shows us that he's very much human here.

See, in verse 2, he ate nothing during those days and at the end of them he was hungry. I think that's the understatement of the year in the Bible.

[16:04] Well, clearly, to be filled with the Spirit doesn't mean becoming a superhero. But as we said, this temptation is a picture of physical urges.

So it's important to reflect that some of our appetites are very strong. They have great power over us. How much of our sin stems from putting our physical urges in the driver's seat rather than Jesus and God's words?

Jesus has experienced that temptation too. But even under the most extreme circumstances, he never fails. He's the better son. Let's move on to our second temptation.

Verse 5. The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, I will give you all their authority and slender. It has been given to me and I can give it to anyone I want to.

If you worship me, it will all be yours. All the kingdoms of the world. I'm not sure where they went. I'm tipping it's not the top of Doncaster Shopping Town.

[17:14] And I'm not sure if ruling the world is the next step on your career plan. But behind this temptation is the seduction to have it all.

Proper temptation. And the irony of this temptation is that when Jesus leaves earth, it was all going to be his anyway. We saw that he's the Psalm 2 king.

The ends of the earth are his inheritance. But the devil says, I know a shortcut. Just worship me. And this one would have saved Jesus a lot of suffering. It would have spared him his own death, wouldn't it?

So let me ask you, what sin would you be prepared to commit to avoid your own crucifixion? What about this? What about if you were offered the whole universe?

Well, verse 8. Jesus answered, it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve only him. And again, Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy. Because in the time of ancient Israel, God rescued them from slavery.

[18:22] He gave them a promised land. He gave them everything they needed for a great life. All you had to do was worship and serve Yahweh. It's a pretty fair deal, actually, when you think about it. But of course they didn't.

They failed and worshipped after other gods. Just like their father, Adam. It's almost the whole story of the Bible, isn't it? Worship gone wrong.

We're bent towards worshipping things that aren't God, aren't we? And the tragic irony here is we chase after things that God wants to give us.

So relationships, happiness, security, pleasure, life. God says, I'll give you all of them in the new creation. Even if not all of them are yours now. But we all want them now, don't we?

Put anything in front of me and I will worship it. See, that's what it means to be a son or daughter of Adam. Well, thankfully, even when Jesus was offered a painless shortcut to career and house and marriage and three kids and a dog and the whole universe, he never gave in.

[19:32] He's the better son, isn't he? Let's look at our final temptation. Verse 9. The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here. And this final temptation, it tests God's goodness. And you can see it's a great way of testing Jesus as he begins his ministry.

Is God going to be on your side? I mean, he's going to ask you to suffer and die. Is he really with you? Let's just check. Throw yourself down from here and we'll see if he rescues you.

And I think this temptation is one of the roots of lots of the sin you see in the Western world. Probably the whole world. But we doubt whether God is really on our side.

We doubt his goodness. Why did he make me like this? Why can't I have that? Why did that have to happen to me? Is God really on my side? Is he really good?

[20 : 36] And so Jesus answers this temptation with verse 12. Have a look at it if you've looked away. Verse 12. Do not put the Lord your God to the test. This is again from Deuteronomy.

See, God told Israel as they were about to enter the promised land. He said, do not put me to the test. I've given you everything. Do not doubt my goodness. Do not doubt whose side I'm on.

But of course they failed, didn't they? They were sons of Adam. And as we see, it says Jesus was tempted for 40 more days in the wilderness.

And it's an echo to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. And what we're seeing tonight, I guess it's like a portrait of the best temptations. But it shows us that no matter what the temptation, Jesus always wins.

That he keeps fending off the devil's words with his father's words. Because he's the better Israel. He's the better son. I wonder how we would have gone in the same wilderness.

[21 : 40] Think of Jesus. If you're anything like me, it would sound like this. Oh, it's not my fault. The urge is too strong. I'm too impatient. I'm just not sure God is on my side.

Think of Jesus. Never any regrets after Jesus' overseas holiday. Never any guilt about late night on his smartphone.

Nothing to apologize for after speaking to anyone. See, on one hand, what Jesus did was very simple. He just obeyed his father.

He just followed his words. See, he's not just the better son of God. He is the son of God. It's no wonder that God smiles down from heaven.

This is my boy. This is my son, whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased. What a pleasure to have a son like this, who endures hardship just to obey his father.

[22 : 42] You can understand why I said this is the most incredible event in human history. It's something truly unique. One of us, baptized like us, born of Adam's line like us, actually won in the battle of temptation to sin.

You see, we're so used to failures, aren't we? So politicians, family, church leaders, sorry. Adam, a loser.

Seth, a loser. Vijay, a loser. You, losers. Jesus, a winner.

It's great that Jesus is just like us, but I think even more great that he's completely different to us. He's the undefeated champion in the battle in temptation to sinning.

And that means we can always be certain. Certain that Jesus will live up to the hype. Certain he'll never disappoint us like the iPhone 7 or let's see what happens with Trump.

[23 : 54] I'm not holding my breath. Certain that Jesus will always do the right thing. Certain he's the one who can start a brand new family tree.

Certain he's the better Adam and the better Israel. And so our final point as we finish, I guess, is our application.

And it's tempting, tempting. It's tempting application to say, be like Jesus when you're tempted to sin. That is the tempting. So all you have to do when it comes to sin is just do what Jesus did.

Quote God's words. And don't get me wrong. We should be like Jesus. He's a model for battling temptation. But I think God's word to us tonight is, recognize that Jesus is the different one.

And so the main time to apply this passage is the times when we failed in the battle with temptation. So maybe you've had a shocker this weekend.

[24 : 59] Maybe your summer has been one you'd rather forget spiritually. The question for those times is, what is your comfort? Is your comfort when you've had a shocker?

Well, I'll do better tomorrow. It wasn't really that bad. It's not my fault. At least I'm not as bad as that guy. Or will your comfort be, I am a son or daughter of Adam.

And I behave like Adam. But thank the Lord, there is one of us who is also completely different to us. Who, when faced with every temptation of the world, he just obeys and obeys and obeys and obeys, even unto his death.

Where the righteous son of God swaps place for unrighteous sons and daughters of Adam. The obedient one for the disobedient ones.

To reconcile us back to our heavenly father. You see, it's only Jesus' perfect obedience that means we can have any confidence that God could look down a family tree and see sons and daughters like us and be pleased.

[26 : 17] A chapter on temptation will always leave us fully aware of how sinful we are. But we can be certain of our Christian forgiveness, our Christian salvation, because we trust in a perfect, sinless saviour.

Let me pray. We praise you, Lord Jesus, that you are like us, that you know what it is to be tempted. And we praise you, that you are also different to us, that you are the better son of God.

You are the true son of God. And, Lord Jesus, when we have a shocker spiritually, help us not rely on our own strength, but help it point to you all the more.

Help us cling to you and your perfect, sinless obedience. We ask it in your name. Amen.