

May 29, 2022

THE TRUE AND BETTER ADAM

Luke 3:21-4:13

(9 of 13 in a series through Luke 1-7)

So much of living the Christian life comes down to trusting the Lord. In order to become a believer, we must trust that the Lord Jesus Christ is who he says he is and did for us what he says he did for us—living, dying, and being raised. In order to walk in obedience, we must trust that what God tells us we should do is good for us and, indeed, better than chasing after sin. And yet, trusting God can be a challenge. It's challenging on the one hand because we have an enemy, always trying to convince us that the path of sin is better for us. And it's challenging because we can easily fall under the delusion that we are wiser than God and can choose best for ourselves, that our life will go better if everything feels like it's in our control, or if we simply pursue what brings us instant pleasure and gratification. But no matter how difficult it can seem, the Bible makes clear that the path of obedience is a path of trust. The Scripture reminds us that we “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7) and commands us to set our eyes not on “the things that are seen but [on] the things that are unseen” (2 Cor 4:18) and eternal.

So how do we strengthen ourselves to walk through this life, trusting our Lord in order to walk in faithful obedience to him? One way is by considering the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and specifically the text that we're looking at today (Luke 3:21-4:13), in which Luke records for us Jesus' baptism, genealogy, and time of temptation in the wilderness. That may sound odd to us, but I think when we see in this text what I believe what Luke wants us to see, then we'll find ourselves strengthened to trust our Father, who loves us and guides us through this life as our loving Father. But in order to see how this text gives powerful encouragement to us in our walk of faith with our Lord, we must first see what this text tells us about Jesus. So, I want to start there, noting that this text shows us that Jesus is the beloved human son of God.

Jesus (the divine Son of God) is the beloved human son of God

I'll explain why I say “human son of God” in a second, but let me first show you why I think this is what Luke wants us to see in this text. Luke begins telling of Jesus' public ministry by telling of his baptism followed by his time of temptation in the wilderness. And this shouldn't be a surprise to us because this is exactly what Matthew and Mark do as well. Obviously Jesus was baptized and then immediately after that was sent by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days where he was tempted by the devil. That's why these three gospel writers record these incidents one after the other. But Luke does something interesting that the other gospel writers don't do. He inserts, between these two events in Jesus' life, Jesus' genealogy. Now, why in the world would he do that? I mean, he doesn't have to include a genealogy. Mark doesn't. And if he's going to include one, why not do it at the beginning of the gospel or near Jesus' birth narrative like Matthew does? Instead, he includes a genealogy but places it after Jesus' baptism and before his temptation. That's odd. Then, he does the genealogy itself in an odd way. Instead of starting with one of Jesus' ancestors and working his way down to Jesus—like

Matthew does, starting with Abraham—he starts with Jesus and works his way back so that instead of hearing “so and so begat” or “was the father of,” you hear “so and so was the son of” over and over again. And what’s more, he takes it all the way back to Adam. So, what in the world is going on here? Well, I think I can show you. Let’s start with Jesus’ baptism and work our way through these sections as Luke puts them together.

Luke tells us that Jesus came to be baptized (and though he doesn’t specify, it was indeed John who baptized him), and obviously this wasn’t because he was proclaiming his own repentance. Jesus never sinned, and consequently had no need to repent. It seems, then, that Jesus was being baptized in order to identify himself with those who were submitting to John’s baptism and seeking to obey the Lord. And Luke tells us that after Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove and then a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (3:22). That voice is obviously the voice of the Father, declaring that Jesus is his beloved son with whom he is pleased. Thus, the baptism ends with the Father affirming that Jesus is his son.

Then, Luke inserts this genealogy. And Luke traces Jesus back to Adam. Now, you may notice that this genealogy is different from Matthew’s genealogy in that Matthew goes from David to Solomon and proceeds to Jesus accordingly, while Luke traces Jesus back to David’s son, Nathan. Why the difference? The most likely answer is that Matthew is showing Jesus’ royal line, thus, revealing why he could be seen as the rightful Davidic king whereas Luke is highlighting the actual biological line that led to Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. But what’s more pertinent for us to note is how the genealogy ends. After tracing Jesus’ line all the way back to Adam, Luke writes, “the son of Adam, the son of God” (3:38). Thus, the last words we have in Jesus’ baptism is the Father affirming that Jesus is his beloved son, and the last words that we have in the genealogy identifies Adam as “the son of God.” Thus, each of the first two sections focus on “the son of God.”

And finally, as Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days by the devil, note the first thing that Luke tells us the devil says to Jesus. Luke writes, “The devil said to him, ‘if you are the Son of God . . .’” (4:3). Thus, we see the thread that ties these three sections together. It’s the theme of the son of God, and I think it’s specifically the notion of the *human* son of God. I’ll explain what I mean.

Jesus is the divine Son of God. We noted that a few weeks back. He is the eternal Son, God the Son, who has always existed and took on flesh for us and for our salvation. However, the title “son of God” isn’t a title that is exclusively used to refer to one who is the divine. It only applies to Jesus that way, but it’s also used in Scripture to refer to mere human beings. For instance, Luke doesn’t hesitate to identify Adam here as “the son of God.” What is he saying by that?

Well, he’s saying that because when God created the world in Genesis 1, he created Adam as the first human. And in doing so, he made clear that Adam wasn’t just another of the animals who would roam the earth. Rather, Adam was created in God’s image and likeness and was told to rule over the entire world as God’s image bearer. Adam was to represent God in his rule over

the earth, resemble God in his holy character, and reflect God in his ways. But why does Luke call him God's "son"? Well, I think it's because Luke was familiar with Moses' language in Genesis 5. After Cain killed Abel, Eve became pregnant again, and gave birth to another son of Adam whose name was Seth. But listen to the specific language used of Seth in Genesis 5:3. Moses writes, "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth."

That language the Moses uses of Seth—being in Adam's likeness and image—is the same language Moses used of Adam in relation to God (Gen 1:26-27), telling us that Adam was created in God's image and likeness. Therefore, I believe that Luke saw in the text what Moses wanted us to see, namely, that Adam was to God as Seth was to Adam—that is, God's son. And what that meant for Adam being called God's "son" was that he was to represent, resemble, and reflect God over creation. This was God's plan for humanity in that moment, and yet, as we all know, everything went terribly wrong.

Adam failed to represent, resemble, and reflect God. Instead, he rebelled against God and brought sin, death, and condemnation into the world. But God didn't abandon his plan of having a human who would be his son, representing, resembling, and reflecting him in his reign over the world. Therefore, he called Abraham to himself and eventually from Abraham raised up a people called Israel as his own. And guess what he referred to Israel as in Exodus 4:22? That's right—his son. He told Pharaoh to let his son go or God would kill his son, and that's exactly what he did. Pharaoh refused and saw his firstborn son die on the night of the Passover, while Israel—God's son—was brought out of Egypt, so that God would say in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

And sure enough, the Lord told them to resemble, reflect, and represent him over the earth. He brought them into a land over which to reign and told them to be holy as he was holy (Lev 11:44), but—like Adam before them—they simply weren't. They too rebelled against God, and they too were driven out of the land that had been their home. But in the midst of this, God still gave hope that he'd have a human who would rightly fulfill this role of being God's son. He told David in 2 Samuel 7 that he'd one day raised up one of his descendants from his own flesh and he'd reign over the world. Specifically God told him, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Sam 7:14). And yet king after king after king failed in this task, failing to represent, reflect, or resemble God in any way. They too rebelled against him.

Yet, God had made a promise. He would not abandon his plan. There simply must be a man who would fill this role, a man from David's line who would resemble, reflect, and represent God in his reign over the earth, a man who would fittingly bear the title "son of God" that Adam and Israel and Israel's kings had so disastrously failed to live up to. This is what Luke is telling us, and I believe it's why he includes the genealogy here, reminding us that Adam was God's son. He's telling us that Jesus is not only the divine Son of God, but as a man (the *God-man*) he is the human son of God as well, who—in his humanity—would perfectly resemble, reflect, and represent God. Jesus fulfills the role the Lord always intended for humanity to fill. He is the one who is holy as his Father is holy, who reflects God so perfectly that Jesus could say, "If you've

seen me, you've seen the Father," and who represents God's reign perfectly as he reigns over the world as the Father's right hand. Luke is telling us that the divine Son of God is also the human son of God. He fulfills the role God purposed for a human that no human could fill—except Jesus. That's the first thing I want us to see, second, we need to see that as the obedient son of God Jesus trusted his Father, even toward the path of suffering.

Jesus trusted his Father, even toward the path of suffering

After the Father declares that Jesus is his beloved son with whom he is well pleased, Jesus goes into the wilderness and is tempted by the devil. Luke mentions that Jesus hadn't eaten for forty days and was hungry, and so the devil tempts him, saying, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" (4:3). Now, the nature of this temptation is a bit tricky because it's clearly not sinful for Jesus to work miracles, even the miracles regarding food. He'll turn water into wine and multiply fish and bread after this moment. Thus, in an isolated sense, there's nothing inherently wrong about turning stones into bread. The reason this would be sin, however, is because Jesus is solely committed to doing what his Father tells him to do, and at this point, obedience to his Father means fasting, not eating and not turning stones into bread in order to have a meal.

Thus, the devil is subtly suggesting that Jesus that his Father is holding out on him what would be best for Jesus. Or, we might say that he's suggest that Jesus' Father isn't treating him as a beloved son. "If you're his son," he seems to suggest, "then why are you so hungry? Your Father is holding out on you. Why is he treating you so poorly?" This is the same nature of the temptation that Adam and Eve faced in the garden. But Jesus' response is to quote from Deuteronomy 8:3, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

Now, this isn't teaching us that simply quoting Scripture has magical power. Rather, Jesus is quoting Scripture to affirm the nature of his relationship with his Father. He knows that he needs more than just bread to live. He needs what his Father has for him. He needs to be obedient to his Father's word. If the devil is telling his God isn't trustworthy, in that he isn't being treated as a son, Jesus is reminding the devil that he trusts his Father to always lead him in what is best.

Luke then tells us that the devil took Jesus up and showed him all the kingdom of the world, saying, "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. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours" (4:6-7). Now, this can be confusing to us because we want to say that the devil is bluffing. He doesn't have control of these things. However, the Scripture refers to him as the god of this world or god of this age, and Revelation 13:1-4 tells us that the devil gives his authority to the beast who rails against the church (which seems to be a picture of the oppressive state). Therefore, the devil is pictured in Scripture as having great authority. Moreover, Jesus doesn't tell him he's wrong.

What then is the nature of this temptation? It is basically for Jesus to demand that the Father give him what is his. After all, if Jesus is the beloved son and one who will reign over all, then all

of this will be his one day. In Psalm 2:8, the Father says to his beloved son, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” This would be his. God had promised it. Thus, devil is basically saying, “I’ll give you a shortcut. You don’t have to worship your Father and wait to receive what he has for you. Worship me now, and you’ll get it now. You deserve this now.”

However, the path to the glory the Father promised Jesus was to go through the cross. Remember that Jesus’ obedience is an obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jesus obeys his Father to go to the cross. And the devil is trying to get him to short-circuit the process, trying to get him to chase the crown without going through the cross, or, demand that the Father give him now what is promised to him. But Jesus answers by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, saying, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve’ (4:8). He trusts his Father and will follow the path he has for him. He’s committed to give his life in obedience to his Father as an act of worship.

Finally, the devil takes him to the pinnacle of the temple and says, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’” (4:9-11). Here the devil is suggesting that the Scripture promises the Father will care for his son, so Jesus make him prove it. Put him to the test. But Jesus answers, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, saying, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (4:12). In other words, he will not demand that his Father prove his care for him. He trusts his Father and need not test him.

Three times the devil tempts him, and all have to do with suggesting that the Father isn’t trustworthy, isn’t caring for him, needs to demonstrate and prove his care right now, without Jesus facing suffering. And each time Jesus assures the devil that he trusts the Father, even as he walks toward a path of suffering. He’s denying the devil’s temptations, knowing that obedience to his Father will cost him great suffering. He is the obedient son—unlike Adam and Israel—who trusts his Father, even toward a path of suffering. But how does this help us learn to trust the Lord? Well, it reminds us that we are beloved sons of God in Christ, who must also trust our Father.

We are beloved sons of God in Christ, who must also trust our Father

The reason this picture is so helpful for us is because, first, we too are beloved sons of God. We’ve mentioned over the last several weeks that when we are united with Christ by faith, what is true of him becomes true of us. And because Jesus is God’s beloved son in whom his soul delights, so we are beloved sons in whom God delights. This is why Paul can speak of believers as being adopted as sons of God. And the reason he uses “sons” collectively for men and women is to remind us that though only males in that culture were typically heirs, in Christ, all God’s children are heirs. Thus, he writes in Galatians 4:7, “So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”

Therefore, every path the Father takes you down in this life is a path in which he is treating you as his beloved son. Now, the devil may tempt us at any point in the same way he tempted Jesus. He may point to the circumstances of your life and say, “Your Father sure isn’t treating you like a son right now. He’s holding out on you. Maybe he’s not really a loving Father.” And at that point, we can think back to this text when Jesus reminded the devil of what is true—sometimes the Father who loves us treats us as sons by leading us down a path of suffering. And because we know he’s good and because we know he loves us, we will trust him and obey him every step of the way. We can remind ourselves that our Father is treating us even as he did his own Son during the days when he was heading toward the cross.

He may well lead you down a path of suffering—just as he did Jesus—but it doesn’t mean that he’s punishing you or is against you. It means that he’s treating you as a son whom he loves. And should you ever doubt it remember that Jesus—who lived, died, and was raised—did that because he loves us and gave himself for us. Let us remember that now as we come to the table. Amen.