

Luke 3:21 – 4:13

^{3:21} Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while he was praying, heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.’ ²³ When he began his ministry, Jesus himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

^{4:1} Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, he became hungry. ³ And the devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ ⁴ And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’ ⁵ And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to him, ‘I will give you all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore if you worship before me, it shall all be yours.’ ⁸ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’ ⁹ And he led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning you to guard you,’ ¹¹ and, ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’’ ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’’ ¹³ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.

Historical and Cultural Background

- Luke’s genealogy does not narrate every generation. The term ‘the son of’ could also mean ‘the grandson of’ or simply, ‘the descendent of.’ Luke marks 77 generations from Adam to Jesus, and in Jewish association, 7 meant ‘completion.’ The main idea: Jesus completes humanity.

Jesus	Joseph	Mattathias	Shealtiel	Joshua	Joseph	David	Admin	Abraham	Shelah	Enoch
Joseph	Mattathias	Semein	Neri	Eliezer	Jonam	Jesse	Arni	Terah	Cainan	Jared
Heli	Amos	Josech	Melchi	Jorim	Eliakim	Obed	Hezron	Nahor	Arphaxad	Mahalaleel

Matthat	Nahum	Joda	Addi	Matthat	Melea	Boaz	Perez	Serug	Shem	Cainan
Levi	Esli	Joanan	Cosam	Levi	Menna	Sala	Judah	Reu	Noah	Enos
Melchi	Naggai	Rhesa	Elmadam	Simeon	Mattatha	Nahshon	Jacob	Peleg	Lamech	Seth
Jannai	Maath	Zerubbabel	Er	Judah	Nathan	Amminadab	Isaac	Eber	Methuselah	Adam

- *Baptism* was based on the Old Testament pattern of God forming people into new life through water, like Israel coming through the Red Sea. It's a symbol of becoming or joining God's true humanity. Notice:

Adam & Eve	Noah & family	Israel
Gen.1:2 the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters ... ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (God then placed humanity in a garden land .)	Gen.7:24 The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days. ^{8:1} But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. (Noah then planted a garden .)	Ex.14:29 But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians... (Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years until God placed them in the garden land .)

Baptism was a rite of passage for Gentile converts into Judaism. It represented God cleansing a person from sin through that person's repentance, and new birth as a new person into the community of God's people, Israel. Therefore, John the Baptist was making a fairly radical statement by calling for *Jews* to be baptized.

- *Evil in the heart/ human nature*: The Jews had learned that there was a corruption within human nature that needed to be healed by God (Gen.6:5; Lev.26:41; Dt.30:6; Ps.51:9 – 10; Jer.4:4; 9:26; 17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.36:24 – 26). Jesus took on fallen human nature (John 1:14) and was healing it through his own life (Luke 2:52).

Questions

1. If you were God, how would you absolutely respect human choices, and heal humanity of its evil? FYI, here's a comparison of ways that different belief systems have of dealing with human evil
 - a. Change external circumstances, make better laws, let each person work off the evil (through good deeds)
 - i. Rabbinic Judaism
 - ii. Islam
 - iii. Mormonism
 - b. Get used to the evil out there, suppress your desires
 - i. Hinduism
 - ii. Zen Buddhism
 - c. Transform human nature itself and then offer people a new, fresh, purified humanity. Only with Jesus do we see God someone actually transforming human nature itself. Let's see how God does this.
2. What do you think this whole experience was like for Jesus? Gather ideas, impressions.
 - a. What did baptism symbolize? (If people are familiar with baptism, if they have some church background, connect through that.) Cleansing for sin, renewal, purification.
 - i. Notice that water is a motif in Jewish history symbolizing the coming of new life and renewal: Creation waters (Genesis 1), Flood waters (Genesis 6 – 8), Red Sea waters (see 1 Corinthians 10 discussing Exodus 13 – 14).
 - ii. God brings out new life from waters.
 - b. What's fasting like? It's tough! Lonely, hungry, thirsty, no iPods to distract you from your own state of being, no nice bed, no video games to distract you, no work or friends to distract you from reflecting on your state. This is a spiritual purification process.
 - c. What else could the Father have said to Jesus? I mean, if you're seeing your kids off to school, you give them a pep talk or some advice. This was the start of Jesus' ministry, and he would immediately go through a really big challenge. Why does the Father say this???
3. What do you think about Jesus repeating the story of his people? Why does the Spirit lead Jesus into *the wilderness*? Why did Jesus have to suffer like this?
 - a. What happened in the wilderness before? Israel had been there, too, for 40 years, after being 'baptized' in the Red Sea. So the wilderness was part of Israel's foundational story. Notice that Jesus quotes *exclusively* from Deuteronomy, so we know he's thinking about that part of Israel's story. (Moses gave Deuteronomy to Israel while they were all wandering in the wilderness.)
 - b. What is the U.S. foundational story? What if Jesus sailed from England to Plymouth, MA on a ship called the Mayflower and started to deal kindly with the Native Americans (who are still there today)? If he intended to redo the U.S. but undo its sin, that's what he would do.
 - c. So Jesus is redoing Israel's foundational story but undoing its sin. Jesus is the 'new Israel' who was going to succeed where Israel failed.
 - i. Illus: When Jesus came into my life, he began to re-tell my story and re-live my story to undo patterns of sin in my life. The most powerful instance of this was during the summer after my junior year of college. That was the time my parents finally decided to get their divorce. My dad's drinking had escalated to an alarming place. Now my way of dealing with my family, ever since 10th grade, was to leave. After I got my driver's license and my car keys, I was out of there. I'd go over to a park or to a friend's place to distract myself. I didn't even have a thought for my younger sister, who was four years younger than me, who I left at home to deal with the mess I didn't want to deal with. But that summer, I felt Jesus say to me, 'I want you to stay.' I said to him, 'I don't have the strength to do that. If what you said is true, Jesus, then you need to be here in me, living your life out through me.' And he did. My parents couldn't afford a lawyer, so they had me arbitrate who gets what. I remember going into that time saying, 'I can't do this!' But during that time, Jesus filled me with a sense of his love for me. And he gave me his love for my parents. I was able to listen sensitively to both of them. In fact, every other time before that, my response to them was, 'You have to stay together – for my sake' or 'You have to get a divorce – for my sake.' But I had never considered it for their sakes. Jesus helped me separate myself from my parents' marriage so they could make a decision that was best for them. Jesus gave me his love for my parents. He gave me his

strength to stay at home. He gave me insights so I could counsel my sister with what she was feeling. At the end of that summer, I was talking to my friend Malcolm, whose family had gone through a similar thing earlier. I told him what I was experiencing and how I was meeting Jesus throughout it all, and he said these words to me that I'll never forget: 'Mako, how can you be so other-centered at a time like this?' I treasure those words as a reminder to me of the difference Jesus makes.

- ii. Illus: Somehow, we know that in all good stories, the happy ending doesn't just come out of nowhere. It replays the mess ups people had done before. Like with Anakin and Luke Skywalker. How many of you are Star Wars fans? Do you notice that Luke repeats motifs from his father Anakin's life. In Anakin's duel with Count Dooku, Anakin loses his green lightsaber, but he also has Obi-Wan Kenobi's blue lightsaber. During the fight, a power cord is cut, which turns the lights off. So Anakin and Dooku fight in a blue and red lightsaber duel, with blue and red lights reflected in their faces. In that duel, young Anakin loses his right hand. Of course, Anakin later chooses the dark side and becomes Darth Vader. Luke Skywalker replays his father Anakin's story, but redeems it. He has a blue lightsaber, and with it fights Darth Vader, who now has a red lightsaber. So Luke and Darth Vader fight in a blue and red lightsaber duel, with blue and red lights reflected on their faces. They are in a dark room, and replay the same moves that Anakin and Dooku did. In that duel, young Luke Skywalker loses his right hand. So the stories parallel each other. But Luke later does not choose the dark side. He stays on the good side of the force and redeems his father, yes, but also his father's story. The victory echoed the defeats of the past, but reversed them.
 - iii. Illus: The Red Sox have a lot of history like that. The Red Sox won the World Series in 1916 and 1918, and then traded Babe Ruth to the NY Yankees in 1920. They didn't win another championship for 86 years. It was called 'the curse of the Bambino', i.e. Babe Ruth, and it seemed true. How many of you know that sad story? Whenever the Red Sox went to either the American League championship or the World Series, they lost through some weird fluke, each time. In 1975, the Sox lost to the Cincinnati Reds in game 7, in the 9th inning, after being ahead 3-0. In 1978, the Sox lost the American League playoff to the Mets. In game 6, Bill Buckner just had to catch the ball and throw it to home, but he let the ball go through his legs, and the Mets scored the winning run. They lost that game, then lost the next game and lost the World Series. In 2003, in the American League championship, the Sox were beating the Yankees in the 8th inning of game 7. They were up 5-2. But the Yankees won in the 9th 6 - 5. It did seem like the Red Sox were just cursed. No matter how well they did, something tragic always happened. But in 2004, as we all know, the Red Sox won the World Series. But they didn't just win, they won in such a way that they replayed many of the past events but redeemed them. They beat the Yankees, their arch-rivals, for the American League Championship after the Yankees had already won 3 games. And the amazing thing is that NO ONE has ever come back to win 4 straight games after losing the first 3. Curt Schilling pitched on a bleeding ankle because he had torn sutures because he had torn tendons. And in the World Series, the Red Sox beat the St. Louis Cardinals in 4 straight games. To add a surreal touch to the World Series victory, there was a total lunar eclipse that colored the moon a deep red color. The moon was red when the Red Sox won the World Series at last. The victory echoed the defeats of the past, but reversed them.
 - iv. Happy endings don't come out of nowhere - they repair the failures of the past. Adam's race brought evil into the world. Adam's race will help to heal it. Why does it work that way? - Because God is committed to working inside the story. Not from outside it, because He would then overrule humanity's place in the story. He is so committed to us, in love and justice, that this is the way He brings it about. **PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** How do you think Jesus would re-live your life story with you, and heal you and transform you?
4. What is the devil's strategy? To get Jesus to doubt his identity.
 - a. Is there really a devil? A personal incarnation of evil? Well, although it's hard for skeptical people in the West to believe that, the rest of the world believes in a spiritual realm and definitely

evil spiritual beings. Adam and Eve, as the original rulers of creation, allowed the serpent (the devil) to be influential in the world through their own sin.

- b. How does the devil taunt Jesus to prove his identity? The 1st and 2nd times. On the 3rd time, he just makes a naked power offer. Of course, if Jesus accepted that, he would have become a 'son of Satan.'
 - c. What's the big deal about turning stone to bread? Why didn't Jesus just do that? It would have opened a landslide into having Satan define the terms of Jesus' faith in God. Satan is trying to instill doubt into Jesus, that God's declaration can't be trusted on its own. Thus, Jesus should feel the need to prove it over and over again. One of those days, there would be disappointment. So instead, Jesus says, 'man lives on every word that falls from the mouth of God.' The last words he had heard from God were the words at his baptism about his identity!!
 - d. DISCUSS: Where do you find your sense of identity? Accomplishments? Relationships? It's easy to feel like the Father's voice is not very affirming, so we look around for other affirmation. If we don't receive our identity from God by relying on Jesus do that for us, we will basically run around asking other people to tell us who we are.
 - e. Why does Jesus struggle? Is he really tempted? By what? His own humanity, the self-centered humanity that he was wearing, wanted to be self-centered. But Jesus refused it.
 - i. I've often wondered what that was like for him. We have very little idea what it means to resist the evil and self-centeredness within ourselves, because we give into that self-centeredness fairly early on. Like how many of you guys are virgins not because you've resisted temptation, or is it just because you've not had the opportunity? That's the difference here. Like how many of you choose not to go shopping when it's offered you, and instead, give that money to children in poverty'? The only way we know how strong our own evil is, is to resist it. And the longer we resist it, the more we feel it. If you read the saints of the past, they were really aware of their self-centeredness because they were pushing so hard against it. We're not really aware of our self-centeredness because we pamper ourselves so quickly. We eat when we want, change the channel when we want, customize our play list and our refrigerator to our comfort. We have no idea how evil we can be because we protect ourselves from it.
 - ii. Do you believe that Jesus' human nature craved sin? Sex? Physical comfort? Bitter anger against the Romans for oppressing his people? Revenge? Do you believe that Jesus had a mind like ours, which wanted to think private thoughts apart from God? But he always, always did one thing. When his own human nature wanted to just have an easy life, Jesus said, 'No, my life belongs to God.' When his own humanity wanted to lash out at his enemies, Jesus said, 'No, my life belongs to God.' When his own humanity wanted to sin, Jesus said, 'No. I belong to God.' He constantly took his own humanity and redirected it to God, to receive the love of God to the fullest, to love God absolutely. Jesus was healing human nature, the human nature he had taken on.
 - iii. Here's an analogy: The closer the Ring got to Mordor, the stronger it became. It became heavier on Frodo. It put fear and hate in his mind. It poisoned him. We don't know the real power of selfishness, because we give into it fairly early on. And the only way to know the power of our own selfishness is to resist it. Jesus resisted it, every moment, all the way to the end. And Jesus couldn't just put it down. It was part of him.
5. Possible Applications
- a. (for non-Christians) How else do you think the corruption in human nature can be dealt with, except through Jesus?
 - b. When we are tempted, it is usually because we are listening to other voices than the Father's. What other voices are very influential to us? How can we let the Father define us more?
 - c. (for Christians) If we are in Jesus, then Jesus makes the affirmation the Father gives him to us, so that the Father says, 'This is My daughter' or 'This is My Son' 'in whom I am well-pleased. What would help us hear and understand the Father's affirmation better?
 - d. (for Christians) When it comes to Christian leadership and ministry, which is coming up next for us in the coming sessions, it's really important to have your identity in Jesus. Because you'll confront failure, disappointment, success, etc. and you'll be tempted to find your identity in your effectiveness (or lack thereof) instead of your identity in Christ. But to be steady and strong, you've got to know your identity in Christ above all else. Notice Jesus said in Luke 10:20,

‘Nevertheless do not rejoice in this [ministry success], that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.’