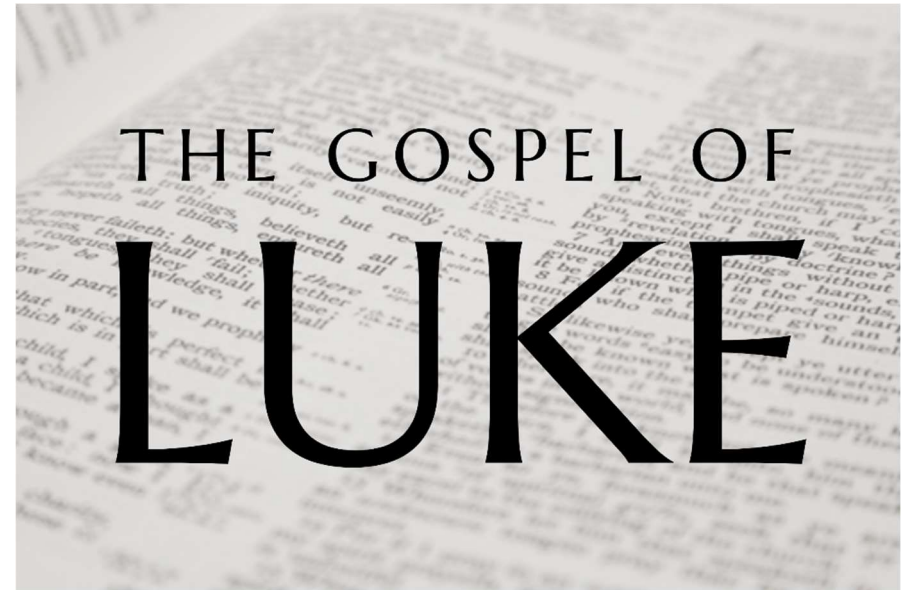


second Adam, is refusing to go down that road. Even though he is the Son of God and has the power to do otherwise, He will wait on the Father to provide. In doing so Jesus is clearly identifying with us, (Hebrews 4:15) and showing us how to respond.

These are days of uncertainty and vulnerability and Satan will come and say to you, 'God doesn't care for you. Look at the restrictions on our life. Do whatever it takes to provide for whatever needs you have!' DO NOT listen to him. His sole intention is to separate you from your daily communion with God by getting you to think you must provide for yourself. Which of course you can't. Look at the physically broken and mentally vulnerable Jesus in the wilderness, who through cracked lips whispers, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' My Father will provide! Hold fast to his words! Remember Matthew 7:9-11, and live trusting in and obeying God.

- Q1. Who takes Jesus in to the wilderness and why?
- Q2. What lies behind Satan's words? What is his objective?
- Q3. How does Jesus respond?



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 4:1-4 - Jesus is led, driven into the Wilderness.

V1. Jesus has just left the Jordan with the words ringing in his ears, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." What a wonderful way to start his ministry, and then, Luke tells us that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Mark says, "the Spirit drove him immediately out into the wilderness." Mark 1:12. Why into the wilderness? Because a spiritual battle has been arranged by God between his Son and Satan. God eternally decreed this, as he does with all things, to fulfil his purpose for our eternal redemption. So, Jesus goes from the pinnacle of praise to the crucible of conflict, (Hebrews 2:18).

V2,3. The first temptation. Satan realizes that Jesus has been fasting for forty days. He has eaten nothing, so he is physically weak and mentally vulnerable. While Jesus' body and mind were unaffected by the consequences of sin, he was nonetheless human and required food and water to live. Scientific research on the effects of fasting for a prolonged period is limited because of the obvious danger it poses to life. However, information gleaned from those who have engaged in hunger strikes makes it clear that Jesus would not have been in a good state either physically or mentally by the end of these forty days.

The words of the temptation are simple, "command this stone to become bread." The idea - 'Jesus you are dying. You need to eat. If/since you are the Son of God, exercise the power you have; do this and save yourself. Essentially 'you don't need God; you can do it yourself. And more to the point where is God anyway? You are in desperate need, and he's not here to help. Show your divinity, demonstrate your power, exercise your independence, and live'.

It is an often-repeated refrain path by Satan, 'You don't need God.' For Satan, first it is about separating us from our communion with God. His goal is to bring spiritual discouragement, and then to whisper, 'and where is God anyway, I thought he loved you?

V4. Jesus' response. "It is written," three crucial words. Our sword is always God's Word, Ephesians 6:10-20. It is the only defensive and offensive weapon in this spiritual warfare that will work.

Jesus addresses Satan's core allegation/suggestion of 'you're on your own, so take care of yourself' by taking Satan to Deuteronomy chapter 8. To when God brought his people into the wilderness, to teach them to trust Him to provide for them. Why? To prepare them for the repeated occasions when they would have to trust in Him as they went to war in the land, He had promised on oath to them. So, Jesus is saying that now in his wilderness experience, he as a 'man', is going to trust his Father to provide. Unlike the first 'man,' Adam, who had succumbed to the temptation to be like God and ushered in the Fall, Jesus the

Thursday – Luke 3:23-38 - Jesus begins his ministry.

V23. Jesus was thirty when he began his ministry. This was probably because a Levitical priest had to be thirty before he could hold office, (Numbers 4:47). While this is not normative for men engaging in ministry today, it is worth considering.

V24-38. Jesus' genealogy shows us that he was a real man and not a Greek or Roman mythological demi-god like. That it goes back to David points to his Messianic qualifications. And then to Adam brings out his relationship to all mankind. That he is the Son of God, v38, indicates that He is the Creator of all life.

Luke's genealogical account is very different from Matthew's gospel. First, Matthew's is at the very start of his gospel. Second, Luke begins his genealogy with Jesus and works back to Adam. Matthew starts with Abraham and works forward to Jesus. Third, there are differences in content. As noted, Luke gives us the genealogy from Abraham to Adam; Matthew doesn't. There is nothing in Matthew's genealogy from Adam to Abraham. But that's not the only difference in content. While they are virtually the same from Abraham to David, they then diverge into two different lines.

As to why Luke begins his genealogy with Jesus and works back to Adam, whereas Matthew starts with Abraham and works his way to Jesus? It is possible that Luke is setting up the context for the oncoming battle between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness. A battle where Jesus is meeting Satan as the 'last' Adam. 1 Corinthians 15:22,45. This is also the reason for the location of Luke's genealogy, i.e. immediately before the temptation of Jesus.

There are explanations for the differences in content. Some suggest that it runs through Mary's line; Matthew takes it through Joseph's family. Another suggestion revolves around Joseph's father. In Luke's account, he is said to be Heli, whereas in Matthew's, it's a man called Jacob, the explanation for the difference being founded in a levirate or kinsman-redeemer marriage. The third suggestion is that Luke cites the descendants of David according to the line, which leads to Joseph the father of Jesus, whereas Matthew gives the legal descendants of David, i.e., those men who would have held the throne had it continued to exist.

One final thought on this genealogy. It speaks to the issue of mortality. We know very little about most of the names cited in this list. Men who would have lived their lives, having their fair share of joy and sorrow, hopes and fears, plans and dreams, but one thing they all shared is that they lived and they died. Such is our life also. We live and we will die, the issue is ready we ready for death?

Q1. What age was Jesus when he started his ministry?

Q2. Why do we need a genealogy of Jesus?

Monday – Luke 3:7-14 – Repentance and faith, the goal of preaching.

Luke, a medical doctor and not one given to exaggeration, gives us a concise synopsis of John's ministry. V7 Evidently, John was not skilled in the art of modern 'seeker-sensitive' preaching, speaking aimed at wooing people and then keeping them coming through comforting messages. The issue he is addressing is hypocrisy – saying one thing and doing another. Engaging in outward religious activity, with no true regard to or for God Himself. John knew that the Holiness of God demanded Divine judgement upon sin, and preached out of a desire to confront his hearers with that reality. His desire to see their repentance and deliverance from the 'wrath to come' – Hell, should be that of all preachers.

V8. John, possibly referring to an historic cairn of stones (Joshua 4) makes the point that God is the one who can do what He wishes with whoever wishes. So, it's not about who you know, or what your family heritage is, what matters is who you believe in and what you do. A godly heritage is a wonderful blessing, but it does not automatically lead to a holy life, it is covenant child's responsibility to take decisions that will prove that they are a lover of God.

V10. John's preaching was a direct challenge to the heart - 'what must I do'. It was the same on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached Christ. (Acts 2:37). Biblical preaching will elicit a 'who am I before God and what must I do to please God' response. That's the case because the point of Biblical preaching is to conform us to the image of Christ as a lover and servant of the Father.

V11. When Christ changes a person mind and heart that will be evident in what that life says and does. The formerly selfish will look to care for others; those who handle finances will be honest; those who have a position of influence will not abuse their power.

A word of caution, don't think of 'repentance' as a one-off event. We must be constantly coming before God and asking Him to search and 'see if there be any grievous way in' us, (Psalm 139). We really need to expose our innermost being to God in the knowledge that we cannot flee from him, and that He has hemmed you 'about' with His love. Those who make themselves vulnerable by are constantly seeking out regular dealings with the God are those who are will feel the most secure in their relationship with the Lord.

Q1. How does John characterize his hearers?

Q2. What does John say must be seen in the life of the lover of God? What were his hearers relying on?

Q3. What happened when John preached?

Q4. What does this passage bring to our own hearts?

V15. Two consequences flow from Biblical preaching. The first is that the people start to think about how the Word of God applies to them personally. The second is a growing expectation that God is going to be at work among them. Of course, there is also a third, for some rather than be confronted by God, they confront the preaching, and if the preaching doesn't change, then they seek out somewhere where they know they won't be confronted, a disastrous response.

V16. John quickly addresses the misapprehension that he is the Messiah. He makes it clear that he is inferior to the One who is to come, both in terms of who he is, and what he is doing. As far as the coming 'Christ' is concerned John knows that he will not even be worthy to untie His sandal-thong. And this was a task considered so menial that rabbinic teaching prevented lowly disciples from doing it for their unpaid teachers as a gratuitous service. The day we begin to think that we are crucial to what Christ is doing in the lives of others, is the day we cease to be of any use to him. The giant of a Christian, Paul had it right when he said, "but I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24). This is the attitude that must permeate our hearts and minds.

In terms of what he is doing, John fully understands that the baptism he is faithfully exercising is inferior to the baptism of Christ. That regenerating and renewing baptismal work will be done by the Holy Spirit and not water.

V17,18. The visible Church is a 'mixed' community comprising both the truly converted, and those who profess faith but remain dead in their trespasses and sins. Believers and unbelievers, the holy and unholy, the converted and unconverted sit together in every congregation. False mimicking of faith, phantom faith is so prevalent (Matthew 7:21-23) that the correct discernment of a person's true standing before Christ can be extremely difficult. The reality is that the wheat and the chaff will continue together until the Lord returns, but on that day, there will be a separating, and it will be a perfect, solemn and eternal separation. Christ the judge will not get it wrong. He knows all things; he sees the unseen heart and has a grasp of the unrevealed thoughts. The righteous by true faith will enter into his presence, a place of unimaginable joy for eternity. The wicked, those who rejected Him, will be sent from his presence to experience unspeakable horror throughout eternity.

Q1. What happens when John preaches?

Q2. Who do the people think John might be? How does he respond?

Q3. Will everyone who says they are a Christian be in heaven?

V18. Luke tells us what happens to John. Of course, it doesn't happen at this time, Luke is simply finishing off what he has to say about John before beginning his account of Jesus' ministry. John would challenge Herod over his relationship with his sister-in-law, Herodias; they had divorced their respective partners and married, which led to his imprisonment and ultimate beheading in fulfillment of a sordid promise. Matthew gives more information (Matthew 14:1-12). So, John's life and ministry was relatively short but it was highly effective for he did what God called him to do – 'prepare the way for the Lord'. Some people live their entire lives and never achieve what they have been put on the earth to do.

V21. Luke begins his account of Jesus' ministry with his baptism. While Luke's account appears understated, this is a highly significant event in both Jesus' life and world history. (For a more detailed account, see Matthew 3:13-17). The opening of the heavens is a rare occurrence in God's Word. Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet, speaks of the heavens opening and seeing visions of God, Ezekiel 1:1. As he is dying, the first known martyr, Stephen, says, that he sees the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, Acts 7:56. John, recounting God's vision to him, states that it was by way of the heavens opening, Revelation 4:1, 19:11. These occasions of the 'opening of heaven' are remarkable because each led to a specific revelation from God. This occasion of the opening of heaven is beyond remarkable for it marks the call to, and commencement of, Jesus' public ministry. A call accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit and by a voice from heaven.

V22. All four gospels say that the Holy Spirit descended unto Jesus in the form of dove, but Luke alone speaks to it in bodily form. So, it was not merely an aberration seen by just John and the Lord. Luke is also the only one to tell us that the Holy Spirit descended after the baptism, i.e., when Jesus was speaking with his Father in prayer. As we work through Luke, we will see that Jesus was continuously in communion with his Father during his life on earth. The fact that we think we can get by with occasional prayer is a bit of mystery.

V22. The words from heaven declares are simple but eternally profound. "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased." This is both a divine declaration about Jesus, and a declaration to Jesus, in preparation for his work. To the question, 'why Jesus was baptised?' From the start of his ministry, Jesus identified with the sinners he came to save, and aren't we thankful that he did.

Q1. What happens to John and why?

Q2. Where and how was Jesus baptised?

Q3. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be baptized by John?