

Jeesus really is the ultimate Son of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 January 2021

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] It would be great if you could have that reading from Luke's Gospel in front of you on the sheet, or even better, in your Bibles. It's a great opportunity to learn to bring your own Bible to church, actually.

I know it's very Anglican of me to say that, but anyway. My daughter has applied two weeks ago for her first ever job at McDonald's, but we haven't heard anything yet.

I told her it's because she didn't ask me for a reference. To which she replied, why would that help? To be fair, I mean, why would it? Why would a father's reference help a daughter get a job?

But references are often part of the job application process, aren't they? Because a reference helps confirm they're the right person for the job.

Well, as we come to our passage in Luke today, it's like we are given some Jesus' references, which confirm he is the right son for the job.

[1 : 0 1] You see, our passage is connected by the title Son of God and the repetition of the Son, which, as we heard, runs all the way through the passage. But for us, we hear the phrase Son of God, we automatically think God the Son, don't we?

The second person of the Trinity, because we've been taught that for 2,000 years of church history. And it's true, Jesus is God the Son.

And there's only one of those. But the phrase, other way around, Son of God, was originally a title for God's representative.

Someone who was meant to reflect God's character and life-giving rule in the world. And there are actually quite a number of them.

So we're going to have to work a bit hard in our passage today. There's a bit of Old Testament background, and I need to give you a bit of introductory background, like the fact that many are called, or were called, sons of God, like Adam.

[2 : 0 8] So if you've got your pieces of paper there, your readings, at the end of the second big paragraph, have a look at the end of verse 38. The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, who was the son of God.

Adam, here, is called the son of God. Not just because God created him, but because he was created in God's image, you might remember.

To reflect God's character and life-giving rule in the world. And I say life-giving because God's rule is not like human rule, which is so often oppressive, isn't it?

God's rule instead gives life. For example, God's rule says that we're to forgive others rather than holding grudges. And that's life-giving because when we hold a grudge, we are consumed by bitterness and anger, aren't we?

And that's not freeing and life-giving, is it? Or to take another example, God's rule says we don't have to be perfect to get to heaven. We just need to trust in him and his son.

[3 : 1 4] Is that not freeing? Is that not relaxing and literally life-giving? God's rule is life-giving.

But the way Adam was to reflect God's life-giving rule was by obeying God's word, which told him how to rule, didn't it? And remember in the Garden of Eden, God's word or rule said you can eat from any tree, hundreds of them.

You can have the biggest fruit salad, fruit from all these trees ever, every day. Just don't put that one fruit in the salad. You know, like kiwi fruit.

Why do you, that's slimy. Anyway, of course it was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, wasn't it? And God said don't eat fruit from that one tree. Why?

Well, because when you eat of it, you will surely die. That's a pretty life-giving rule, isn't it? But this son of God, Adam, didn't go so well, did he?

[4 : 16] Instead of always obeying God's word, he gave in to temptation. And so God called Abraham and formed the nation of Israel, who on the next slide was also called God's son, his firstborn son.

And not just because God formed them by calling Abraham, but because they were to be a holy nation to reflect God's holy character and God's life-giving rule to the nations around them.

How would they do that? Well, by obeying God's word. Because as they obeyed God's word, they would live long in the land God was giving them. And the nations around them would say, hey, they've got it pretty good over there.

Let's go and check it out. And then they would come and find life under God's rule too. But God's son Israel didn't go so well either, did they?

Instead of always obeying, they too gave in to temptation. And so later, every king in David's line was going to be called the son of God. So on the next slide there, we've got this promise from 2 Samuel 7, where God promises David that he will raise up his own offspring, his descendant to take over his throne as king.

[5 : 28] And notice in the yellow, God says, I will be his father and he will be my son. I refer to every king in David's line, which is why the last bit makes sense.

When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men. If that was just talking about Jesus only, that wouldn't make sense, would it? But it was talking about all the kings in David's line.

The point is, in the minds of the first century readers, the phrase son of God was first of all a title for God's representative, like God's king, who are meant to reflect God's character and life-giving rule by obeying God's word.

But no son always did. Sadly, every son gave into temptation. And then comes Jesus.

And Mary, we've read earlier in Luke's gospel on the slide, was told that her son, Jesus, would also be the son of God, the son of the Most High. And he would rule on his father's throne, King David.

[6 : 37] He would be a king. That kind of son of God. But here's the question. How do we know this son, Jesus, is going to be any better than the other sons?

How can we know we're not wasting our time following this particular son of God? Well, Luke now shows us these references for Jesus to confirm for us that he is the right son for the job.

So we can know we're not wasting our time, you see. And the first reference is a reference from heaven. And so point one, chapter three, 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 am well pleased. Now, this reference from heaven includes the voice of the father, doesn't it? He declares Jesus is his son.

[7 : 47] Now, no doubt we're meant to see this as a declaration of Jesus being a special son of God. He's actually a second person of the Trinity as well. But the words, you are my son, are actually a quote from Psalm 2 about God's king.

You see, God's king from King David's line on the day he became king, was crowned his coronation day. He would say, God has said to me, you are my son.

Today I've become your father. On that day, that human would become the son of God. And by repeating that phrase from Psalm 2, God's voice from heaven is a reference confirming Jesus is the promised king from David's line.

The son who can administer God's life-giving rule. But this reference from heaven also includes the spirit, doesn't it? Who comes down and descends on Jesus from heaven.

And the spirit coming upon Jesus signals two things. At first, God is commissioning Jesus for his ministry, saying, it's now time to start your ministry. And we know that because that's exactly what Luke tells us in the very next verse.

[9 : 04] Verse 23, Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. So it's commissioning Jesus. But secondly, the spirit also signals that Jesus is not only God's king, but God's servant from our first reading.

Have a look on the screen. Notice, here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, I will put my spirit on him.

And what happens at Jesus' baptism? The spirit comes upon him, doesn't it? Now, if you think that's a bit of a long bow to make, it's confirmed by God's words at the end of verse 22 where he says to Jesus, with you I am well pleased, which is another way of saying, it's saying words in both the Hebrew and the Greek actually, in whom I delight.

In other words, the spirit and God's voice both confirm that Jesus is God's servant. And this servant, if you know the servant songs in Isaiah, the famous one is the one where he will die for our sins.

So Isaiah 53, this servant will be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our sins. And the punishment that was on him brings us peace.

[10 : 28] By his wounds, we are spiritually healed, forgiven. And as the rest of the Bible makes clear, because of this suffering servant who brings us forgiveness, we can be fellow sons of God, fellow sons and daughters with Christ, that we might be God's representatives in the world.

But this reference from heaven with God's voice and the spirit confirms Jesus is the son of God, the servant king. The son who can bring life, God's life-giving rule to the nations, including forgiveness.

The one who will be a light to the Gentiles so that we Gentiles can be fellow sons and daughters. The one who's teaching the nations will put their hope in. All those things we heard from our first reading. Now, with a reference like that, it sure sounds like Jesus is the right son for the job, doesn't it?

There was a high school student in Los Angeles called Connor who asked his principal for a reference for a college scholarship. It's a bit small to read, so let me read it to you. The principal wrote, to a fortunate reader, when Connor Brown looks at a tree, he doesn't see a tree.

He sees the polarity of the water molecules that pulls them to the surface of the leaves. He sees a poem he read in the sixth grade. He sees the article from a 2008 issue of Time magazine about the environmental damage.

[11 : 58] And at the bottom of the screen, he says, the boy's brain is like nothing you've ever seen. And it goes on and on. And it concludes on the next slide with, wherever he goes, he'll play with the mind of every person he meets, push even the brightest to new heights, and develop into an even more brilliant, thoughtful human being.

I guarantee the trees outside your office will never look the same again. What a reference! Now, with a glowing reference like that, it sure confirms his brilliant ability, and no wonder he gets the scholarship.

But you see, this is actually God's glowing reference for Jesus, from heaven itself. and it confirms Jesus as the one who's ripe for the job of son of God, servant king, one like no other.

But so does the next reference, not from heaven this time, but from history. The reference begins with Jesus' family history in verse 23. Now, Jesus himself was a 30 years old when he began his ministry.

He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, and so on. I actually didn't want you to have to read all those names, Alison, but very well done, all 78 names.

[13 : 22] I was very impressed. We should all congratulate her after the service. But if you know Matthew's genealogy at the front side of his book about Jesus, you'll know there are a number of differences.

We're not going to work through all those names, but Matthew traces Jesus' family history back to King David because he wants people to know that Jesus is the King, the Messiah, and then back to Abraham because he wants people to know that Jesus is the one who will bring the promises and blessings that God promised to Abraham.

But Luke goes even further, doesn't he? He goes all the way back to Adam to highlight that Jesus is part of the human race.

You see, Luke knows about the virgin birth. It's why he says in verse 23, Jesus was the son, so it was thought of Joseph. He knows Jesus is ultimately from God.

It's why he ends the genealogy with God. But Luke also wants to highlight that Jesus is one of us. He is a son of all these people, the son of the human race, a son of Adam.

[14 : 37] which is why he goes back to Adam. Now, why is this important? Well, because it means that Jesus, this King, can be our King. Let me see if I can illustrate with our government's recent decisions, including the conversion bill that I mentioned.

I must confess, I was muttering to my parents in New South Wales and said, I probably shouldn't confess this, but I said, I wish your premier was our premier. Don't repeat this to anyone else.

Now, the New South Wales premier is not perfect, but I've watched several of her press conferences and she always comes across as genuine and sympathetic. But to be our premier, a lot of things would happen, have to happen, including, she'd have to become one of us, a Victorian, to be our premier, wouldn't she?

Well, to be our genuine and sympathetic king, Jesus too has to become one of us, a human. And this reference from his family history shows that he is.

He's a son of Adam. So he can be our king, our son of God, for he's one of us, you see. But he's also the very best of us, for where every other son of God failed, he succeeded.

[15 : 59] And we see this from his personal history this time, not his family history, his personal history. Chapter 4, verse 1, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, if you are the son of God, tell this stone to become bread. Here, there's a, an allusion to God's firstborn son, Israel.

Because just as God led Israel into the wilderness for how many years? 40. Yeah, thank you. God led by the Spirit Jesus into the wilderness for how many days?

40. There's this comparison being made here. And while I assume Jesus was able to drink water, we're told he ate nothing, which would have made him pretty hungry.

I remember doing the 40-hour famine. Do you remember doing that? That was back in those days. I struggled through that. I was eating barley sugars all the time. And our kids can barely make it 40 minutes before asking for something to eat or opening the fridge door to see if any food magically appeared between the last few minutes.

[17 : 11] And so when we're told he hasn't eaten anything and he was hungry, it's a bit of an understatement, isn't it? But we're told this so we know that it's a real temptation for Jesus.

He really is hungry. He could really do with some bread. But why is that a temptation anyway? I mean, Jesus turned water into wine. Why not stone into bread?

Well, you see, the devil knows he is the Son of God. The word if should really be since you are the Son of God. I mean, God just declared it at his baptism and by the end of chapter 4 on the screen the demons are shouting it.

You are the Son of God, you know, the King. They know who he is. So rather, the temptation for Jesus is to trust in his power as Son of God rather than in God's provision.

That's the temptation. And I say this because of the background to verse 4. Verse 4, do you see there? Jesus answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone. And this is taken from the Old Testament on the next slide from Deuteronomy where God led Israel for 40 years in the desert and notice, he humbled them, causing them to hunger, then feeding them with manna.

[18 : 32] Why? To teach them that they do not live on bread alone. There's the quote that Jesus uses, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

In other words, they need to learn that their lives ultimately depend on God's word, not bread. And they need to learn that so that they might trust in God's word to provide more than their bread.

But of course, if you remember the story, Israel didn't, did they? Do you remember they stockpiled manna in their tents for the next day? I've got my stockpile of bread, I'm going to be right now. In other words, they trusted in their own resources rather than God's word that said, don't worry, I'll provide for you the next day.

And so the temptation for Jesus is to trust in his own power to provide rather than trusting God's word to provide. For us, it's a little bit different.

God has given us the power, resources and abilities in order to provide for ourselves and others. That's why we should work with our hands, says the Bible, that we might have something to share with others. So usually in our situation we are to use that power, but like Israel and like Jesus, we're not to trust in ourselves and our own resources more than in God.

[19 : 54] Let me see if I can illustrate, for example, do you trust in a healthy bank balance more than in God to provide? Or to put it differently, what helps you sleep better at night knowing you've got money in your super account or bank or that God is your heavenly father?

And do we trust in our brains and abilities more than God to provide? So when we face a need or a problem, how long is it before we pray for God's help?

I'm a doer. As soon as I see a need or a problem, I try and fix it. I've been told for 20 years of my marriage, it's not always about fixing the problems, Andrew, just listening to me.

But I always try and fix the problem and sometimes it's days before I realise I've not even prayed for God's help to deal with the problem. And sometimes I think God graciously prevents me from fixing the problem so that I might remember to pray and trust in Him to provide too.

Has that ever happened to you? Trusting ourselves more than God is actually an easy temptation for us to fall into, isn't it? But this Son of God, Jesus, didn't.

[21 : 14] He resists. So the devil tries again in 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 splendour.

It's been given to me, I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours. That second temptation is one to worship someone else because it's easier.

I should point out, by the way, that the devil's claim to have all authority and splendour of the world is exaggerated. You've got to remember his job is to bend the truth. That's what he does.

For while the Bible calls him the prince of this world, the authority and splendour splendour of the world really is God's, isn't it? And God has actually given it to Jesus.

We sung at Christmas time Jesus, Lord, at your birth. He's already Lord. But for him to enter into it all fully, he has to first go to the cross, doesn't he?

[22 : 17] In other words, Jesus' path to glory, authority, splendour, is through suffering, agony, for us. So this would have been a real temptation for Jesus.

I mean, do you remember what he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane? If it is possible, can you take this cup from me? He knew what was coming and here is the devil offering this other path to him, offering to take the cup from him if he worshipped and followed the devil instead.

It was a real temptation. And this temptation to worship another because it's easier is real for us too. I mean, if we worshipped the world, we'd all get our Sunday morning sleep-ins back.

That would make the weekend a bit easier, wouldn't it? Or if we worshipped ourselves and followed what we wanted to do, then we wouldn't have to love our enemies and we could give in to all our desires, do what we want, watch what we want.

that would make our lives easier too. Or if we followed the world's views of life and humanity, then we wouldn't have to be persecuted for the Bible's views on life and humanity.

[23 : 33] That would make life easier too, wouldn't it? Of course, it's all short-term ease because life in hell will not be easier, will it?

In fact, nor is life without God in this world easier in the long run. Nonetheless, it's an easy temptation for us to fall into, isn't it?

Yet, this Son of God didn't. Verse 8, Jesus answered, it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.

Well, given Jesus has been using God's Word to resist temptation, the devil now decides to use God's Word to bring another temptation. Verses 9 and 13, we don't have time to look at it and unpack it now, but I just want you to notice that in verse 12, Jesus, again, doesn't give in, does He?

He resists temptation. You see, Jesus succeeded where every other Son of God like Israel, Adam, kings, us, failed.

[24 : 44] Jesus here defeated the devil, which signal He could defeat the devil later at the cross. Jesus, He never gave into temptation, which means He never had to pay for His own sins and could pay for our sins instead.

He could be our servant, suffering servant. See, unlike every other Son of God, Jesus always obeyed God's Word, which meant He could perfectly reflect God's character and administer God's life-giving rule to the world.

What better Son of God is there? And so, the big application for us this morning is not so much to resist temptation like Jesus did. Don't mishear me.

We should try, which is why I unpacked the temptations. We should even follow Jesus' example of remembering to use God's Word to help us resist temptation. But in the end, none of us can resist completely like Him, can we?

Rather, the big application for us this morning is to know with certainty that Jesus is the perfect Son of God for the job. He's different to every other one.

[26 : 02] He's the right one to reflect God's character to us, to administer God's life-giving rule over us, a rule that comes with forgiveness for us, that makes us fellow sons and daughters with Him.

You see, Luke has written his Gospel, remember, that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught, like, Jesus is the Son of God.

And he's given these references here in chapter 3 and 4, which confirm He is the perfect Son of God, the perfect servant King. We're not wasting our time following Him.

We can entrust our lives to Him. I mean, when you go for major surgery, you put your life in the surgeon's hands, don't you? And when you do, most of us, I take it, would ask our GP, they're a good surgeon, right?

They're good at what they do, yeah? And if you knew other people who had been under the knife with this surgeon, you'd ask them, the leg's still okay, it's still working? In other words, you get personal references to confirm they're the right surgeon for the job, wouldn't you?

[27 : 13] Because you're putting your life in their hands. Well, here are Jesus' references from heaven and from history. They confirm He's the right Son of God for the job of servant King, that we can put our lives in His hands, and so will we?

Will we continue to trust in and follow Him? Let me finish with another high school reference for college, this time for Jack. His last name and school name are blacked out for privacy, but here it is.

Jack is an adequate student. Sincerely, English department chair. The end. Can you imagine getting that reference? It's not a great one, is it? But these references here for Jesus confirm that He's not adequate, He's perfect, the ideal Son of God in whom we can continue to entrust our lives to.

Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank You for this reminder this morning that while there have been many sons of God in history, there have been none like Your Son, the Lord Jesus.

We thank You for these reminders this morning, these references so to speak that confirm He is the perfect, the ultimate Son of God, the perfect servant King. And so we pray that You would help us each day to continue entrusting our lives to Him.

[28 : 42] We ask it in His name. Amen.