



Study 4 — Luke 3: 19 – 4: 13

The Preparation of the Messiah: his baptism

Luke rather oddly records the imprisonment of John (3: 19, 20) before the baptism of Jesus by John. He does this because only Jesus is really important in the rest of the story.

He continues his account of the preparation of Jesus for his ministry with first his baptism and then his temptation.

- 1) *Ice breaker.* What was the most memorable part of your baptism (if you were old enough to remember it) or confirmation?
- 2) Matthew tells us why Jesus was baptised (Matt 3: 15). Luke is only concerned with what happened when he was (v 21 – 23). Which major Christian teachings are important in what happened? Why is it important for us to hear about these before we hear about Jesus starting his ministry?

Genealogies were important in those days to show who someone was. Why this one is considerably different from the one that Matthew gives is not clear. Both are carefully structured around (different) multiples of seven. Probably Luke is most interested in his last line: Jesus was the son of God.

The main purpose of the three temptations is to teach us things about Jesus. Things like the order of the temptations, different in different Gospels, are not important. We will explore five emphases of the temptations in the following questions:

- 3) *The temptations make clear the nature of Jesus' work as the Son of God.* In which verses in this story is Jesus called the Son of God? What sort of Messiah will the people have been expecting from texts like: Gen 49: 10; Num 24: 17 – 19; 1 Sam 21: 11 (an example of how a Davidic king was supposed to be); Ps 2: 6 – 12; Is 11: 1,4,10 – 14; Dan 7: 13, 14, 27; Zec 9: 9 – 17? How do the temptations show that what they were getting was very different from what they expected? Which were fulfilled then and which are still to be fulfilled?
- 4) Share something of how your own understanding of Jesus has changed during your Christian life as you have learned more about him.
- 5) *The temptations of Jesus are very like some of the great events of Israel's history.* Read Ex 16: 2 – 4; 17: 1 – 7; 32: 1 – 4; and 1 Cor 10: 1 – 7. Which story in Exodus is like each one of the 3 temptations? What is the fundamental difference between each pair of experiences?
- 6) *The temptations demonstrate the antagonism of Satan to the Kingdom of God.* In some churches Satan is never mentioned; some talk too much about him, blaming him for every thing that goes wrong even when it is a very human fault. How would you rate our emphasis on Satan: too much, too little or just right? How does it compare with the emphasis in Luke's story?
- 7) *The temptations emphasise that Jesus' ministry is the fulfilment of scripture.* Identify how they do this. This emphasis is particularly important in the end of Luke's Gospel

at Lk 24: 32. What do you find the hardest part of reading and learning from scripture? What tips can you give other people to ease the problem?

- 8) *The temptations show Jesus' followers a way to resist temptations.* The basic ideas behind the three temptations are 1) using your faith for personal gain; 2) using it to make yourself look good before other people; 3) putting God to the test in practical ways. Look at each temptation and decide whether those are the right descriptions of them. If not, what is? In what ways, often trying to hide their real motives, do people sometimes try to put God to the test? Which of these temptations do you experience most?
- 9) The devil left Jesus 'until an opportune time' (v 13). When, or under what circumstance, does he get a good opportunity to go after us? What can we do to discourage him?

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