

Sermon Study Notes // Luke 3:21-23 // January 10, 2010

“Submit to Jesus' Authority and Live Like Him”

As everything can't, and shouldn't, be crammed into a sermon, here are some additional study notes for you to reflect on ahead of, and after, Sunday's sermon.

Introduction (Luke 3:15-20)

We're studying Jesus' baptism and the implications of it as reported in the Gospel of Luke 3:21-23. John the Baptist has been preaching and leading people to be ready for Jesus, but a misunderstanding has arisen and some are wondering if John himself might be the Messiah!

John corrects this in Luke 3:15-17 by proclaiming that one "more powerful" than himself is coming. The difference between the two is in their baptisms--John is a baptizer in water, the Coming One will baptize with the "Holy Spirit and fire." This is simply a biblical way of saying that the Coming One's baptism will judge-and-purify the repentant one being baptized and will also unite that one with God through the Spirit. (Many biblical references testify to the power of the Spirit to guarantee our salvation with God; for example, Ephesians 1:14; Acts 2:38-39.)

Although the Gospel of Luke reports that John's "fire and brimstone"-style of preaching is "good news," the downside to John's testimony is that he suffers imprisonment that eventually leads to his murder. Sometimes being on the front lines for Jesus means taking on risk that you won't be accepted...or worse. Yet, Jesus still calls us to remain faithful to him.

Jesus' Baptism (Luke 3:21-22)

Jesus' baptism itself is presented to us differently in Luke than in Matthew or Mark, where the emphasis is on the new age being brought into place in Jesus (Mark) or on who is doing the baptism and what this means (Matthew). In Luke, the Gospel neither tells us who or how Jesus was baptized. But we learn that Jesus prayed after his baptism, and that during that time heaven opened--which is another biblical way of telling us God was doing something new and important in Jesus--and a voice speaks!

The voice is not directly attributed to God the Father, though the language used makes clear it is this God who is claiming Jesus as his own beloved Son. This language is interesting also for what it tells us about Jesus and his relationship to God and role as the Messiah, God's anointed one who would save the world.

Psalm 2:7

There are two aspects to God's speech that tie in to Old Testament promises. First, God calls Jesus his "Son." Specifically, the voice says, "You are my Son." This is a direct quote from Psalm 2:7, in which God is speaking to the king of Israel. God calls the king his son and tells the king that he--God--has become his father. The function of the psalm was to bestow legitimacy upon the king as an agent of God, rather than that agency wresting solely among the priests. Yet, it took on a messianic function as well, and was used by Jews to think about the coming new age when God would restore their fortunes. The Messiah would be God's Son. And here, in Luke

3:22, [God claims his Son, the King--Jesus](#).

Isaiah and the Servant Songs

Secondly, God claims about Jesus that he loves him and is well pleased with him. This phrase is connected to Isaiah 42, and to the set of hymns in Isaiah that are known as the [Servant Songs](#). In these Songs, a representative of Israel is set up who will suffer to atone for the sins of Israel (in this way, the representative serves Israel). These songs became messianic prophecies, and here, in Luke 3:22, God claims Jesus as his suffering servant, foreshadowing the ministry (and death) Jesus would have.

The language from Luke 3:22 is specifically linked to Isaiah 42:1, in which God says, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, / my chosen one in whom I delight; / I will put my Spirit upon him...." Of course, Jesus receives God's Spirit in Luke 3:21, and this concept is picked up again in Luke 4:14-30 (which references a different of the Servant Songs).

Summary

One last thing to note in Luke 3:21 is that nothing special occurred around Jesus' baptism (only after). In fact, Luke clearly tells us that Jesus was one of many who were being baptized. This is important because it relates to us Jesus' common humanity with us. He is not different or "above" us--he is one of us. As Hebrews says, we are Jesus' brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:11).

Yet, in sharing a commonality with us, Jesus is distinguished in being our representative as well. ("Servant" [cf. Isaiah 42:1] often carried the notion of being someone's "trusted envoy" in ancient near eastern culture.) Yet he is also our King (Psalm 2:7). In leading us, he represents us, and suffers for us, so that we can be made whole before God and rescued.

Is it too much to submit to our king's authority and to live like him?