

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 3

Today This Scripture Is Fulfilled

Luke 3–4

Baptism, genealogy, desert, and the Nazareth manifesto: the study's title word arrives

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that all three of Jesus' answers to the devil come from one small stretch of Deuteronomy, Israel's wilderness examination, and that Luke's genealogy runs past Abraham all the way to Adam, son of God: Jesus enters the desert as the new Israel and the new Adam, and passes the test both failed. Then in Nazareth he opens Isaiah and speaks the word this study is named for.

Catholic Touchstone: The baptism of the Lord as the manifestation of the Trinity and the anointing of the Messiah (CCC 535–537), Christ's victory over temptation as the recapitulation of Adam and Israel (CCC 538–540), and the Nazareth proclamation of the great Jubilee (CCC 1286, 714).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 3 opens with a six-part chronological anchor, emperor, governor, tetrarchs, high priests, the historian planting a flag: this happened in datable public time. John's baptism of repentance draws crowds, and his preaching is bracingly concrete: two coats, share one; tax collectors, stop skimming; soldiers, stop extorting. When the people wonder whether John is the Christ, he points forward: one mightier is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

At the baptism, Luke gives us the Trinity in a single frame: the Son praying in the water, the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove, the Father's voice, Thou art my beloved Son. The words fuse Psalm 2:7, the coronation of the Davidic king, with Isaiah 42:1, the servant in whom God delights, and the dove over the water recalls the Spirit hovering over the deep at creation and over the flood at the world's rebirth. The sinless one stands in a sinner's baptism because he has come to stand where sinners stand; the anointing (Christos means anointed) inaugurates his mission (CCC 535–536).

Then the genealogy, and its placement is the point. Matthew opens his Gospel descending from Abraham to Jesus; Luke pauses between baptism and temptation to climb from Jesus backward, past David, past Abraham, all the way to Adam, the son of God. The next word of the narrative sends this Son of God into the wilderness to be tempted. Luke has built a hinge: where Adam, son of God, fell in a garden of plenty, Jesus, Son of God, will stand in a desert of hunger. St. Irenaeus called this recapitulation: Christ rewinds humanity's story and plays it again, this time without the fall.

The temptations replay Israel's wilderness as much as Eden's garden. Forty days answer forty years, and every one of Jesus' three replies is quoted from Deuteronomy 6–8, Moses' commentary on the desert years: man shall not live by bread alone (Deut 8:3, the manna lesson), you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (Deut 6:13), you shall not tempt the Lord your God (Deut 6:16, the grumbling at Massah). Tonight's central discovery puts the group in Deuteronomy to find all three themselves. Where Israel demanded bread, flirted with idols, and put God to the test, the true Israel answers Scripture to Satan and stands. Note Luke's ominous exit line: the devil departed from him until an opportune time. That time comes in Session 13, when Satan enters Judas.

Nazareth (4:16–30) is Luke's programmatic scene, moved to the front of the ministry like an overture. Jesus stands, receives the scroll of Isaiah, and reads the mission statement of the anointed one (Isa 61:1–

2 with a line of 58:6): good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed, the acceptable year of the Lord, the Jubilee language of Leviticus 25, when liberty was proclaimed, slaves went free, and ancestral land was restored. Then he sits, and every eye fixed on him, he says the sentence this study is named for: Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Sēmeron. Not someday. The wonder curdles fast: when Jesus reminds them that Elijah was sent to a Sidonian widow and Elisha healed a Syrian leper, Gentiles both, his hometown tries to throw him off a cliff. The pattern of the whole Gospel, and of Acts, is set in one afternoon: the anointed one, the poor, the outsiders, the rage of the insiders, and the escape: he passes through their midst and goes his way (4:30).

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isa 40:3–5 A voice in the wilderness; all flesh shall see salvation (Luke alone extends the quote this far) — **Lk 3:4–6**

Ps 2:7 with Isa 42:1 Coronation of the King fused with the Servant's anointing — **Lk 3:22**

Gen 5:1–3 Adam, made in God's likeness: the genealogy's last rung — **Lk 3:38**

Deut 8:3; 6:13; 6:16 Israel's wilderness lessons: the source of all three answers — **Lk 4:4, 8, 12**

Isa 61:1–2 with 58:6 The Spirit-anointed herald of the Jubilee — **Lk 4:18–19**

Lev 25:8–13 The year of liberty behind the acceptable year — **Lk 4:19**

1 Kgs 17:8–16; 2 Kgs 5:1–14 The widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian — **Lk 4:25–27**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration 39, On the Holy Lights*)

Preaching on the Lord's baptism, Gregory bids the Church rise and be enlightened with Christ: he is baptized not to be cleansed, for he sanctifies the waters, but to bury the old Adam in the stream and to open heaven over human flesh. Christ goes down into the Jordan carrying the world, and comes up drawing the world after him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies* V, 21)

Irenaeus reads the temptation as the rematch of Eden: the enemy who conquered a man at the beginning is conquered by a man in the end. Where Adam was beguiled over food in abundance, Christ, fasting and hungry, refuses to break obedience for bread, and answers every assault from the Law, so that the disobedience worked through the tree is undone by obedience, and the strong man is bound by the one he once bound.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the Nazareth sermon*)

Cyril hears in the Isaiah scroll the whole shape of the Incarnation: the Son, anointed with the Spirit not for his own sake but for ours, proclaims release to a race held captive, sight to minds darkened by the fall, and the acceptable time in which God's kindness is poured out. The words were fulfilled that day, Cyril insists, because the Reader was himself the text's subject: the anointed one stood among them, reading his own commission.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 535–537 The baptism of Jesus: acceptance of his mission as suffering Servant, the heavens opened, our own baptism prefigured.

CCC 538–540 The temptations: Jesus the new Adam and true Israel, victorious where Adam and Israel fell, in solidarity with us.

CCC 695 Anointing: the full sense of Christ, the one anointed by the Spirit, manifest at the Jordan and announced at Nazareth.

CCC 714 Isaiah 61 as the promise of the Spirit that Christ opens his preaching with.

CCC 1286 The messianic anointing at the Jordan as the root of Confirmation's theology.

THREAD WATCH

Today / sēmeron (PLANTS TONIGHT, develops Session 11, resolves Session 14): 4:21 is the study's title verse. Name the word for the group and tell them to start hunting it: Luke will say today at the moments that matter most. They already met it once without noticing, at 2:11.

Opportune time (plants tonight, resolves Session 13): 4:13, the devil departed until an opportune time. Do not explain; just read it slowly. It pays off when Satan enters Judas at 22:3.

Gentiles and outsiders (plants tonight, runs the whole study): Zarephath and Naaman at 4:25–27 begin Luke's long line of blessed outsiders: the centurion, the Samaritan, the ten lepers' one grateful foreigner, the thief. Track it aloud from here on.

Overshadow (SEALED, resolves Session 6): Nothing tonight touches it. Three weeks of silence remain.

SESSION GOALS

1. Read the baptism as the Trinitarian anointing of the Messiah, with Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 fused in the Father's voice.
2. See why Luke parks the genealogy between baptism and desert, and what son of Adam, son of God sets up.
3. Run the Deuteronomy discovery live: the group finds all three of Jesus' answers in Deuteronomy 6–8 and names the pattern, new Israel passing the wilderness exam.
4. Unpack the Nazareth manifesto: Isaiah 61, the Jubilee, and the programmatic sēmeron of 4:21, then face the steelman on the genealogies honestly.
5. Plant the opportune time and the blessed-outsidere threads.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If the clock runs, compress Question 1 (John's preaching) into a summary sentence and drop the Dig Deeper boxes. Never cut Question 4 (the Deuteronomy discovery) or Question 6 (Nazareth and the title word); the session exists for those two. The genealogy steelman (Q3) can shrink to its answer if needed, but do not skip it entirely; someone in your group has heard the objection.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, at the Jordan you tore open the heavens and named your beloved Son; in the desert he stood where we fall; in Nazareth he announced the year of your favor. Anoint this conversation with the same Spirit, teach us to answer temptation with your word, and let your today be spoken over us tonight. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. If a stranger asked the people who knew you at twelve years old what you would grow up to be, what would they have guessed, and how close were they?

W2. What is a test you are actually glad you had to take, in school or in life? What did passing it make possible?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50-60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

The engine tonight is Question 4: the group must find Jesus' three answers in Deuteronomy themselves. Budget fifteen unhurried minutes for it. Everywhere else, keep the pace brisk; two dense chapters are on the table.

1. Read Luke 3:1–20. John's preaching gets very specific when the crowds ask what shall we do (3:10–14). What does repentance look like for each group he answers, and what does that tell you about what repentance is?

Leader: *Draw out how unglamorous the answers are: coats, food, honest scales, no shakedowns.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

John gives no one a mystical program: the man with two coats shares one, tax collectors collect only what is appointed, soldiers rob no one and stop gaming their wages. Repentance in Luke is not a mood but a redirection of money, power, and daily habits, bearing fruits that befit repentance. Watch this: Luke will return to possessions and repentance more than any other evangelist, and a tax collector named Zacchaeus will one day answer John's standard beyond anything John asked.

2. Read Luke 3:21–22. Count the persons present at the baptism. What do the Father's words echo, and why does the sinless one stand in a baptism of repentance at all?

Leader: *Trinity, Psalm 2:7 plus Isaiah 42:1, and solidarity. CCC 536 if the group wants the Church's own words.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

All three divine Persons in one frame: the Son praying in the water, the Spirit descending as a dove, the Father's voice from heaven. Thou art my beloved Son fuses the coronation psalm of the Davidic

king (Ps 2:7) with the servant in whom my soul delights (Isa 42:1): King and suffering Servant anointed in one breath, which is what Messiah, *Christos*, means. He needs no repentance; he stands in the sinners' line because he has come to stand where sinners stand, to let himself be numbered with transgressors from the first day (CCC 536). The dove over the waters is creation's Spirit hovering again: a new creation is beginning in the Jordan.

3. Steelman chain: Skim the genealogy in 3:23–38 and compare its shape to Matthew 1:1–17. A fair-minded skeptic presses hard here: the two genealogies differ, even naming different fathers for Joseph, so at least one is wrong, and the Gospels' reliability is compromised. Give that objection its full force. Then ask two questions of the text: where does Luke's list end that Matthew's does not, and where has Luke placed it in his story?

Leader: Let the difficulty stand honestly before answering. The theological placement is the sure ground; the harmonizations are proposals, and say so.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Honesty first: the lists differ, the difficulty is ancient, and Christians were discussing it by the third century, when Julius Africanus proposed a levirate-marriage solution (legal versus biological fatherhood); others since have suggested Luke traces Mary's line through her father Heli. These are plausible proposals, not proofs, and the Church has defined none of them, so we hold them with open hands. What is certain is what Luke is doing theologically: Matthew descends from Abraham to present the son of David, king of the Jews; Luke climbs from Jesus past David and Abraham to Adam, the son of God, and then, in the very next verse, sends this Son of God into the desert to be tempted. Luke has placed the genealogy as a hinge: the whole human race stands behind Jesus as he walks out to face what Adam faced. His ancestry is not a puzzle to Luke; it is a battle plan.

4. Live discovery: Read Luke 4:1–13. Jesus answers the devil three times, and every answer is a quotation from one small stretch of one Old Testament book. Hunt as a group: find all three sources in Deuteronomy 6–8. Then read around each one. What was happening to Israel when those words were first spoken, and what is Luke telling us about who Jesus is?

Leader: Fifteen minutes, Bibles open. The finds: Deut 8:3 (manna and hunger), Deut 6:13 (worship the Lord only), Deut 6:16 (Massah, putting God to the test). If they stall, point them to chapter 8 first; it is the easiest.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

All three replies come from Moses' sermon about the wilderness years: man shall not live by bread alone is the lesson of the manna (Deut 8:3), worship the Lord only is the charge against idolatry (6:13), you shall not put the Lord to the test names the rebellion at Massah (6:16). Forty days answer forty years. Israel, God's son (Ex 4:22), was tested in the desert on bread, worship, and trust, and failed all three; Jesus, the beloved Son, takes the same exam, hungry, and passes every question, answering Satan with nothing but Scripture. He is the true Israel, and, standing at the end of a genealogy that just called Adam son of God, the new Adam who stands where the first one fell (CCC 538–540). St. Irenaeus called it recapitulation: our story, replayed and won. And note 4:13 like a held breath: the devil departed from him until an opportune time. Remember that phrase; it has an

appointment in chapter 22.

DIG DEEPER: FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke is the evangelist of the Spirit: Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit at the Jordan, led full of the Holy Spirit into the desert (4:1), returns in the power of the Spirit to Galilee (4:14), and opens his preaching with the Spirit of the Lord is upon me (4:18). Luke's second volume will begin with the same Spirit falling on the Church at Pentecost. Everything Jesus does in the flesh, the Spirit will do in the Body of Christ; Luke wrote two books to make one argument.

5. Read Luke 4:16–21. Jesus reads Isaiah 61 in his hometown synagogue: anointed to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed, the acceptable year of the Lord. Look up Leviticus 25:8–13. What is the acceptable year, and what does Jesus claim when he sits down and says today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing?

Leader: The Jubilee, and the study's title word. Slow down at 4:21; have someone read it twice.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The acceptable year is the Jubilee of Leviticus 25: every fiftieth year, liberty proclaimed, Israelite slaves freed, ancestral land restored, families reunited, Israel's economy of mercy. Jesus claims to be the herald and the content of the great Jubilee: in him the captives go free and sins are forgiven, and not someday but *sēmeron*, today. This is the word our whole study is named for, and Luke sounds it at his most decisive moments: today a Savior is born (2:11), today this scripture is fulfilled (4:21), and it will ring out again at two turning points we will reach in Sessions 11 and 14. Salvation in Luke is never a distant policy; it is an arrival. When Jesus finishes the reading, he closes the scroll with the vengeance clause of Isaiah 61:2 left unread: the acceptable year is proclaimed, the day of vengeance is not. The Jubilee comes first.

6. Read Luke 4:22–30. The same crowd that marveled tries, minutes later, to throw Jesus off a cliff. What did he say to turn them? Look at his two examples, the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17) and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5). What do they have in common, and why is that so explosive?

Leader: Both are Gentiles. This is Luke's whole program in one riot.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus reminds Nazareth that in the days of Elijah and Elisha, God's mercy went past many in Israel to a Sidonian widow and a Syrian leper: outsiders, Gentiles, enemies. The hometown crowd wants the Jubilee as a local privilege; Jesus announces it as a world amnesty, and the room turns murderous. Luke has staged his overture: good news to the poor, grace running past the borders, the rage of the insiders, and the anointed one passing through their midst and going his way (4:30): Luke offers no explanation, only the sovereign fact that his death will come at the appointed time, and in Jerusalem, not Nazareth. Watch the outsiders from here on, the centurion, the Samaritans, a thief on a cross; Luke keeps score, and the score runs one way.

DIG DEEPER: ALL FLESH SHALL SEE

All four Gospels quote Isaiah 40 about the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness. Only Luke keeps quoting until the line all flesh shall see the salvation of God (3:6). It is a small editorial choice that contains his entire two-volume project, from Nazareth's fury tonight to the Gospel reaching Rome at the end of Acts.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Jesus answered every temptation from memorized Scripture. When temptation finds you, what do you actually reach for? What one verse could you carry this month so the reach becomes reflex?

S2. Nazareth loved the Jubilee until it included the wrong people. Whose inclusion in God's mercy do you quietly resent, and what would it cost you to pray for them by name this week?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Memorize this week's verse until you can say it under pressure; it is one of the Lord's own desert answers.
- Circle the word today every time you meet it in Luke from here on. Keep the tally in your Bible's margin.
- Before next session, read Luke 5:1–6:49: four calls, a paralytic through a roof, and a sermon on a plain.

Scripture memory: **Luke 4:8**, *You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, beloved Son and true Israel, you answered the tempter with your Father's word and announced liberty in your Father's name. Cancel our debts, open our eyes, and free whatever in us is still captive, not someday, but today. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 3

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Deuteronomy 6–8 is the load-bearing bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 3:1–20 Q1: John's preaching, fruits of repentance

Luke 3:21–22 Q2: the baptism; Ps 2:7 with Isa 42:1

Luke 3:23–38 Q3 steelman: genealogy to Adam, son of God

Matthew 1:1–17 Q3: the comparison text

Luke 4:1–13 Q4: the temptations; 4:13 opportune time

Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13; 6:16 Q4 live discovery: all three answers

Exodus 4:22 Q4: Israel, my firstborn son

Luke 4:16–30 Q5-Q6: Nazareth; sēmeron at 4:21

Isaiah 61:1–2; 58:6 Q5: the scroll Jesus reads

Leviticus 25:8–13 Q5: the Jubilee

1 Kings 17:8–16; 2 Kings 5:1–14 Q6: Zarephath and Naaman

CCC 535–540, 695, 714, 1286 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 5–6, the calls and the Sermon on the Plain. Bookmark Isaiah 6; Simon Peter's knees are going to buckle in a boat, and the group should discover why the scene feels familiar.