

## Luke 3

### Verses 1-2:

***--Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.***

--All the various rulers listed would date this time period somewhere between AD 26-28. The Herod listed here is Herod Antipas, and Annas and Caiaphas were dual high priests because Annas was disposed by the Romans but still regarded as the living high priests by the Jews. Caiaphas was the high priest recognized legally by Rome.

--The key to this passage is the contrast. The most important political and religious powers of the day are mentioned, then we are told ***the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.***

--The world leaders are the role players! The man with the word of God is the key figure. Why? Because the message of God is actually the most important thing in the world. \*Don't get tricked into thinking the halls of human government hold the key to God's work in the world.\*

--The phrase, ***the word of God came to John.*** . . is typical of God's message through OT prophets (**Gen. 15:1; 1 Sam. 15:10; 2 Sam. 7:4; 1 Kings 17:2, 8; 18:1; Jer. 1:1-2**).

--Has God spoken to man? What has He said? The creation's ultimate necessity is the decree of our Creator.

### Verse 3:

***--And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,***

--How much the Jews practiced baptism is a matter of debate. Some think Gentile proselytes were commonly baptized, while others say the practice didn't occur until after the fall of Jerusalem. Either way, John's baptism was clearly unique to him and his ministry as he alone is called: ***the Baptist*** (**Mt. 3:1; 11:11-12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13; Mk. 6:14, 24-25; 8:28; Lk. 7:28, 33; 9:19**).

--John's baptism was a public declaration of confessed sin by a repentant sinner.

--Repentance is a changing of the mind. The sinner agrees with God *against* himself.

\*Hallesby (The Christian Life): *"The decision involved in repentance is this: Will the sinner be still and listen to all that Jesus has to say about his inner as well as his outward sins, or will he seek to evade the truth? If he wills to evade the truth, he cannot be helped no matter how much he seeks God."*\*

--For the ancient Israelite, any true comprehension of Moses' law made for easy acceptance of the need for personal repentance. Then, with hearts repentant and ready for remission of sins, Jesus comes as the Lamb of God, and with a gracious offering of righteousness—His own!

#### **Verses 4-6:**

**--as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"**

--The language of Isaiah (**40:3-5**) is picturing a forerunner or delegate telling a city to prepare for the arrival of a coming monarch.

--John's voice was literally ringing out in the wilderness (**Mt. 11:10; Jn. 1:23**).

--How were they to prepare? How were they to make their crooked ways straight? By repentance!

#### **Verses 7-9:**

**--Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."**

--Matthew (**3:7-10**) tells us that John was specifically speaking to the religious leaders. John calls them a **brood of vipers**, certainly, this is desert language, but it is also the language of the Holy Spirit. We find it in Jesus' mouth as well.

**\*Matthew 12:34: Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.\***

**\*Matthew 23:33: Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?\***

--Jesus Christ echoes John's language and warns of the same hell. The poisonous, devious, satanic nature of the religious leaders is encapsulated by the terms *viper* and *serpent*.

--How can we tell if repentance is genuine? First and foremost, by the proper fruit! The religious leaders refused John's baptism (**Mt. 21:25; Lk. 7:30**), and did the works of the devil (**Jn. 8:44**).

--Our fruit-bearing is a habit. Fruit reveals the "nature" of the tree. So too with the actions in our lives. Not just one sinful moment, but our habits/harvests.

--John goes right at the typical excuses and justifications of the religious leaders—their Abrahamic lineage. They needed Abraham's faith and works, not just his blood. **\*No one is "born Christian"! There is no excuse for unrepentance.\***

--John warns of the coming future judgment. Certainly, the fall of Jerusalem would apply publicly, but also the wrath of God personally.

--God's wrath is an act of holy preservation. It falls on all that would destroy or taint the good end He is working toward.

--Two preachers, filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, both warning of God's wrath and hell. The Scriptures are clear. We can be eternally saved. We can be eternally lost. \*Satan's lie is still: *You will not surely die.*\*

#### **Verses 10-14:**

***--So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"***

***He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."***

***Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him. "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them. "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."***

***Likewise soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?"***

***So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."***

--Here we have a summary of John's practical teaching. Repentance from sin looks like something for each and every one of us.

--**(10-11)** Normal folks are now supposed to live conscious of others and their needs. Their giving nature is reflective of the Lord's.

--**(12-13)** Tax collectors are not supposed to quit, but they are supposed to stop ripping people off. They were to be honest in business.

--**(14)** Soldiers are not told to quit. They are told not to abuse their authority through intimidation, manipulation, or extortion.

--Again, Jesus would corroborate John's teaching with His own. There is no conflict between the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

***\*Matthew 7:17-19: Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.\****

#### **Verses 15-17:**

***--Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."***

--John recognizes people are wondering if he is the Messiah. He quickly addresses their thoughts, clarifying that he was only the messenger, not the message.

--First, John acknowledges that his baptism is outward, water only. The Messiah will have an inward spiritual reality to His ministry. \*Jesus is still the only One who can baptize with spiritual reality Vs. mere water.\*

--Second, John says the Messiah is greater than him, so much so that he is not even worthy to play the role of a servant who unstraps sandals and washes feet. \*Jesus Christ alone accepted worship at His feet, kisses, tears, and anointing. None of the apostles ever did! He alone is worthy of such worship!\*

--Third, John makes it clear that the Messiah's baptism will include the Holy Spirit and fire. ***He will. . .*** puts the Messiah's baptism in the near future.

--That Jesus Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit is the distinct promise of Christ Himself (**Jn. 14:16-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7**) and of the New Covenant (**Jer. 31:31-33; Ez. 36:25-27**), and was directly fulfilled at Pentecost (**Joel 2:30-31; Acts 2:19**).

--The reference to a baptism with ***fire*** is less clear, but fire both purifies and purges. Clearly, in the context, John has a sifting process in mind. He uses the picture of someone separating chaff and wheat on their threshing floor until the job is completely finished and the wheat and chaff are isolated from one another. Wheat is then gathered. Chaff is then burned with the type of fire only God can baptize with—***unquenchable fire***.

--The Scriptures make it clear that a mixed multitude will continue on in this world until each is ultimately baptized by Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and the fire of Pentecost or the everlasting fire of hell. **\*Mt. 11:24-30\***

***\*Romans 8:9+14: Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. . . For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.\****

#### **Verses 18-20:**

***--And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.***

--This section is a good example of Luke's writing an ordered account Vs. just a chronological account. As he leaves behind the ministry of John the Baptist for the ministry of Jesus Christ, he summarizes John's ministry and its ultimate ending.

--John is imprisoned by Herod Antipas because he publicly rebuked Herod for getting rid of his wife and marrying Herodias, who was both his sister-in-law and niece.

--Sadly, John's life and ministry do not end easily. He was a true prophet. The forerunner and the Messiah are both unjustly murdered in their early thirties by wicked men.

***\*1 John 3:13: Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.\****

### Verses 21-22:

***--When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."***

--You will notice that John the Baptist basically disappears from the scene. He is no longer Luke's focus. Luke's focus here is the divine witness! The first few chapters featured a series of supernatural public witnesses surrounding the Babe and Boy Jesus, but now, as the Son of Man enters His Messianic ministry, the prophetic forerunner has played his part, and the climactic public declaration comes from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

--Why does Jesus need to be baptized if He was without sin? Why did He need to be human, a baby, circumcised, set apart and redeemed with five shekels, a boy, a carpenter, etc.? Why was He ultimately crucified? Because He was identifying with us!

--Luke also takes note that Jesus was praying at His baptism. This is the first mention of Jesus praying, and Jesus' prayer life becomes a major focus of Luke's gospel. Jesus is communing with His Father as He is baptized and before entering the public work of God in the world. Again, in this, He is our example.

--Why does the Holy Spirit come on Him in the form of a dove?

--First, because the dove properly embodied the spirit of Jesus' ministry on earth. Biblically, the character of doves was seen in their being *clean* (**Gen. 8:8-12**), an *offering for the poor* (**Lk. 2:24**), *beautiful* (**Ps. 68:13; Song. 1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2; 6:9**), and as Christ would say later, *harmless* (**Mt. 10:16**). Each characteristic very indicative of Christ's ministry on earth, and the work of the Holy Spirit in this church age. \*This character will change at Christ's second coming. In Revelation, we see the Holy Spirit embodied as eyes and flames of fire before the throne of God in heaven!\*

--Second, as a clear sign of Jesus being *the only* Man the Holy Spirit could own as such without being defiled. He alone had the Spirit without measure (**Jn. 3:34**) and could baptize with the Holy Spirit.

***\*John 1:32-34: And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."\****

--Finally, before Christ enters into public ministry, the Father Himself pronounces His pleasure in His Son.

--This is the ultimate testimony. You and I were made to please God.

***\*Ephesians 1:5: having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,\****

--It is also our ultimate hope. When we are discouraged with ourselves or with others, we can look to this scene and know that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are fully satisfied in the Person and work of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. \*We are accepted in Him, and the Trinity is at work to save the lost!\*

**Verses 23-38:**

***--Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph. . .***

--There are some interesting contrasts between Luke's genealogy here and the genealogy we find in **Matthew 1**.

--Matthew presents a forward, father-to-son genealogy. Luke gives us a backwards, son-to-father genealogy.

--Matthew, written with Jews in mind, begins with Abraham and David. Luke, written with the world in mind, goes all the way back to Adam.

--With this background, we see the strategic placement of this genealogy. ***Now Jesus Himself. . .*** begins His ministry and becomes *the central figure* in God's plan for the world.

--In Jesus' baptism, it is evident He is the Son of God. In Jesus' genealogy, it is evident He is the Son of Man.

--Luke makes Jesus and Adam bookends for us to look at. We see the imperfect image of God in Adam, running through time until the arrival of the perfect image of God in Jesus Christ.

***\*1 Corinthians 15:45: And so it is written, "The first Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.\****

--The connection and contrast between Adam and Jesus Christ becomes even more evident when Luke introduces Jesus Christ in the wilderness, tempted by Satan. We know what happened with Adam in the Garden of Eden. What will happen with Jesus Christ, alone in the wilderness and tempted by Adam's old foe?

--Praise God, in Christ, we see victory, obedience, and righteousness.

***\*Romans 5:18-19: Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.\****