

# Luke 3

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## Introduction:

Luke now establishes the date for the appearance of John the Baptist, then proceeds to report what John was saying and doing.

## Lesson Content:

The Date John Began Preaching  
    John's Preaching  
    The Crowd Questioned John  
    John Denied Being the Messiah  
    Herod Imprisoned John  
Jesus Baptized and Endorsed  
    The Lineage of Jesus  
        Mary to King David  
        King David to Adam

## THE DATE JOHN BEGAN PREACHING

**(3:1)** It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. (2) Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness.

- Because Luke is writing to a non-Jew (and by extension, the all of us in the non-Jewish world), he is careful to set the date when John the Baptist began preparing the

crowds for the arrival of the Messiah. Luke uses six different secular events to establish the year:

1. **Tiberius** was the second **Roman Emperor** and this was his **fifteenth year** making it A.D. 28-29. The emerging work of John was set against the backdrop of the Empire.
  2. In little **Judea**, **Pontius Pilate was governor**. He answered directly to **Rome**. He ruled from A.D. 25 until A.D. 37.
  3. **Herod Antipas** ruled in **Galilee** where Jesus lived. He reigned from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39.
  4. **Herod's** brother **Philip** ruled in **Iturea and Traconitis**. He reigned from 4 B.C. to A.D. 33.
  5. **Lysanias was ruler over Abilene**.
  6. The **high priests** in Jerusalem were **Annas**, the rightful **High Priest** and his son-in-law **Caiaphas**, the one who could get along with the ruling **Roman** government. God's message did not come through either of these top religious leaders. Instead, he had prepared **John** (vs. 2) out in **the wilderness**.
- Using our dating system, it was A. D. 26. Due to errors in calendar calculations since this time, Jesus was really born 4 B. C. (Christ was born 4 years **Before Christ**. Go figure.)
  - **A message from God came** - this reminds us that the prophets were not continuously inspired, in contrast to Jesus who soon had the Spirit without measure. In this, John the Baptist was like the prophets of the Old Testament era.

## JOHN'S PREACHING

**(3.) Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.**

- **Paul Butler writes:** "The word *baptizo* in Greek means immerse; it can only mean immerse. There is a Greek word for sprinkle, *rantizo*; there is a Greek word for pour, *cheo*. Neither of these words are used in the Greek text for the action of baptism--only the word *baptizo*. All Greek lexicons, ancient and modern, give the definition of *baptizo* to be, "dip, plunge, immerse." The practice of sprinkling for baptism was not officially sanctioned by Christendom until the fourteenth century! To make changes in the mode of baptism is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible!"
- John's **baptism** (vs. 3) connected closely with **repentance** with a view to **forgiveness of sins**. The baptism of Jesus came later. It pictured His resurrection and replaced the baptism that John was administering. Acts 19:4-5.

**(4.) Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,**

**"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for Him! (5) The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. (6) And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'"**

- The quotation from **Isaiah** is from the Greek translation (LXX) of Scripture. That is the one that Luke and Theophilus used normally. It is Isaiah 40:3-5.

- **William Barclay** sets the stage with this: “ When a king proposed to tour a part of his dominions in the east, he sent a courier before him to tell the people to prepare the roads. So John is regarded as the courier of the king. But the preparation on which he insisted was a preparation of heart and of life. "The king is coming," he said. "Mend, not your roads, but your lives." There is laid on everyone of us the duty to make life fit for the King to see.
- Luke is pointing out (vs. 4) that this ministry of John was predicted 700 years before in the writings of **Isaiah**, the **prophet** of Israel.
- **the way for the LORD:** The Lord here is Jehovah, and John is making ready the way for Jesus.
- **All people** (vs. 6). Luke quotes **Isaiah** including this sentence with the international flavor. His readers are primarily Gentiles. Matthew and Mark omit this sentence.

**(7.) When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming wrath? (8) Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. (9) Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."**



- John was not sympathetic with these listeners (vs. 7). His statement could be paraphrased, "You little snakes, who warned you to flee the forest fire?"
- "Change your lives (vs. 8). God is concerned about habits, not heritage."
- The tree thinner is coming (vs. 9). He has already taken aim by placing his axe at the tree's base. Soon he will swing the axe in judgment. The unfruitful **tree** will be cut down and put in the burning pile at the edge of the orchard. This frightening figure generated anxious questions.

### THE CROWD QUESTIONED JOHN

**(10.) The crowds asked, "What should we do?" (11) John replied, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry."**

- **John** required some visible transformation from his listeners.
- **Group 1: The crowds.** The **shirt** was the inner garment worn next to the skin to stay warm. Share an extra one with the **poor**.
- Not everyone had enough **food** to eat. Feed the hungry to show your repentance.

**(12.) Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" (13) He replied, "Collect no more taxes than the government requires."**

- **Group 2: Tax collectors.** These tax-collectors (vs. 12) were told to be content with their wages.

- “They systematically over-charged the people and often brought false accusation to obtain money by blackmail.”  
- **McGarvey**.

**(14) "What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay."**

- **Group 3:** The **soldiers**. They, too, were to be **content** with their **pay** and be fair and honest. Jews were exempt from military service, so these men were Gentiles from neighboring countries serving in the Roman army.
- “The soldiers were not to add to their receipts by pillage or extortion.” — **J. W. McGarvey**



### **JOHN DENIED BEING THE MESSIAH**

**(15.) Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. (16) John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be His slave and untie the straps of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.**

- **The Messiah** will **baptize** with the **Holy Spirit** as at Pentecost. Others **He will baptize** in **fire**. Fire was for punishment in vs. 9 and will be in vs. 17, so it is reasonable to understand it as punishment here also.
- Joel 2:28 had broadly promised the Holy Spirit.

**Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out My Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. (NLT)**

- Joel's fulfillment is approaching.

**(17.) He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with His winnowing fork. Then He will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into His barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." (18) John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.**



An Interpretation of John's Statement:	
Winnowing fork	Gospel preaching
threshing-area	Palestine
wheat	God's elect
barn	kingdom (church)
chaff	unrepentant
Never-ending fire	punishment

### HEROD IMPRISONED JOHN

**(19.) John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. (20) So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.**

- This is the **Herod** of vs. 1. He had the wife of another brother named Philip, a private citizen living in Rome. This was not Philip of verse 1.
- **John** was fading from the scene and the focus would be on Jesus. **McGarvey** says John was jailed "In the fortress at Macherus, east of the Dead Sea, as we learn from Josephus. (Ant. 18:5:2). The duration of the ministry of John the Baptist is variously estimated at from fourteen to eighteen months." There was a lot of preparation for a ministry that lasted a little more than a year.



## JESUS BAPTIZED AND ENDORSED

(21.) One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus Himself was baptized. As He was praying, the heavens opened, (22) and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on Him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are My dearly loved Son, and You bring Me great joy. "



- Jesus received the **Spirit** without limit. John 3:34.
- This is the first of three times God spoke during Jesus' ministry. The other two were at the Transfiguration and during the Final Week of His life.
- Jesus had **brought joy** to the Father. This was before His ministry had begun!
- Luke has quoted heaven on the **sonship** of Jesus in verse 22. Now he turns immediately to his earthly genealogy. Beyond all question, Matthew (in his chapter 1) has presented the line of Jesus beginning with Abraham and ending with Joseph. He shows the **legal right** of Jesus to be heir to David's Throne.

### -- THE LINEAGE OF JESUS --

(23.) Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His public ministry. Jesus was known as the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli.

- Luke had access to the records stored in Bethlehem. What has he recorded? It does not agree with Matthew, and records backward to Adam and God. We believe it is

the genealogy of Jesus through Mary. Here are some reasons:

- Luke generally give the ladies' point-of-view throughout his gospel.
  - Luke's contact was with Mary. She was the source of much of his information to this point in the story. Joseph has been a minor player in the unfolding drama.
  - Luke's audience has little concern about the legal right of Jesus to be on David's Throne. Rather who is Jesus? And how does he fit into history? Luke carried that history well beyond the Jewish nation, clear back to the beginning.
  - This record reaches David through Nathan rather than through Solomon as in Matthew. It simply cannot be the same lineage. This is expanded under vs. 31.
- Luke has already made it clear that Joseph was **not** the father of Jesus. The statement from heaven (vs. 22) laid the claim for sonship to God himself. It appears that Luke, in keeping his presentation of the genealogy conventional, traces back through Joseph as the step-father and then to Heli, Mary's father, then his father, and so on.
  - While Joseph being the son of Heli is not used in the normal sense, neither is Adam being the son of God in verse 38. Adam was made in the likeness and image of God, but he was not a **son** in any conventional sense. So, we have a clear break with the conventional meaning of the word son in one other case in this same list.
  - Men could begin public life in Israel at 30. Evidently Joseph died during the silent years leaving Jesus, the

oldest son, in charge of a widowed mother with at least seven children.

### **MARY'S FATHER BACK TO KING DAVID**

**(24.) Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melki. Melki was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. (25) Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. (26) Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. (27) Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri.**

- **Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel** is identified in Ezra 3:2. So, most of these names cover the years following the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian captivity.

**(28.) Neri was the son of Melki. Melki was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. (29) Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Jorim. Jorim was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. (30) Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. (31) Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David.**

- Matthew is clear that Joseph came from David through the line of Solomon. (Matthew 1:6.) This establishes his **legal** right to be on David's throne. However, Luke is saying that Mary descended from King David through a **branch line**, David's little known son **Nathan** (vs. 31). Therefore Jesus has a **blood** connection with King David on his mother's side.

Zechariah 3:8: "**Listen to Me, O Jeshua the high priest, and all you other priests. You are symbols of things to come. Soon I am going to bring My servant, the Branch.** (NLT)

Zachariah 6:12: "**Tell him, 'This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Here is the man called the Branch. He will branch out from where He is and build the Temple of the LORD.** (NLT)

### **KING DAVID BACK TO ADAM**

(32.) David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. (33) Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son of Judah. (34) Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. (35) Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. (36) Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. (37) Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of

**Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Kenan. (38) Kenan was the son of Enosh. Enosh was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam was the son of God.**

- Without understanding the purpose, the ancients had faithfully recorded the family names back to the beginning. Other family lines in Genesis are incomplete. Only this one carries through with a dating system. The hand of God is clear.
- Adam is a son of God by creation, made in God's image. Hence, man did not come from an animal as heathendom taught and still teaches.
- In the first century, there were unbelievers who attacked virtually every aspect of Christianity, but this genealogy was never attacked. It is reliable.