

Luke 3 – Enter, John the Baptist

I. John was a man God planted in a turbulent time in history, (v. 1)

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 29.....who ruled Rome from A.D. 14-37), Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea (ruling there from A.D. 26-36.....and he was generally in opposition to the Jews), Herod (Antipas—Herod the Greats and his Samaritan wives, Malthace’s son.....Christ called Antipas a “fox”.....he was a conniving, harsh ruler.....Herod the Great had died in 4 B.C.) being tetrarch of Galilee (from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, being then banished by Caligula, and moved to France), his (half) brother Philip (son of Herod the Great and his Jewess wife, Cleopatra.....he was not as ambitious nor as devious as his brothers, ruled his area with relative tranquility and was liked by his subjects. Philips character and disposition did not set well with his dynamic wife, Herodias though, who possessed an evil genius and eventually left Philip to marry Herod Antipas)



tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis (ruling from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34, when he died), and Lysanias (of which little is known) tetrarch of Abilene (whose territory Herod Agrippa acquired in A.D. 37),

The men so designated were rulers of semi-independent regions within the empire of Rome. In descending order of prestige the terms are king, ethnarch, tetrarch. If a ruler:

- (a) was in control of a territory of considerable size and importance, (b) was able to maintain peace and order in his domain, and (c) managed to collect large revenues for Rome’s coffers, he was given the title *king*.
- If this did not happen to be the case, he had to be satisfied with the title *ethnarch* (literally “ruler of a people”)
- or even *tetrarch* (originally, ruler of a fourth part), a kind of “petty prince.”

The terms were, however, flexible: any ruler of low rank might be called “tetrarch”; an ethnarch might be merely a “chief”; and even in the New Testament a “tetrarch” is sometimes loosely called a “king.”

Nevertheless, how eager was the wife [Herodias] of a certain tetrarch [Herod Antipas] to have her husband declared a “king”!¹

II. John was a man God called from the wilderness, (v. 2)

¹ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 11: New Testament commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. New Testament Commentary (200). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

² while Annas (who was high priest from A.D. 6-15.....being removed by the Romans) and Caiaphas (Annas' son-in-law, was high priest form A.D. 18-36.....Caiaphas actually only held the position by title as the people continued to recognize Annas as the rightful high priest as the Jews held that being high priest was a lifetime position, but the Romans changed them at will, so they) were high priests, (it was during this period of time when) the word of God came to John (the Baptist) the son of Zacharias in the wilderness (in A.D. 28 or 29.....with the exception of talking to Zacharias and Mary, God at this point ended the previous 400 years of silence).

MEASURE OF GREATNESS

Powerful religious and political leaders like Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas ruled in Palestine, but they were upstaged by a desert prophet from rural Judea. God chose to speak through the loner, John the Baptist, who has gone down in history as greater than any of the rulers of his day. How often people judge others by the superficial standards of power, wealth, and beauty, and miss the truly great people through whom God works! Greatness is measured not by what a person has but by his or her faith in God. Like John, give yourself entirely to God, so that his power can work through you.²

III. John was a man God lead to preach repentance and forgiveness of sin, (v. 3)

³ And he (John the Baptist) went (back and forth) into all the (solitary) region around the Jordan (where there would be plenty of water), preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission (forgiveness) of sins (meaning having a sorrow over sin and a commitment to turn from it.....baptism made their determination to repent public..... and it also symbolized a ceremonial washing from the sins they were repenting of.....it was like driving a stake in the ground marking a new beginning.....they were still looking forward to the Messiah's coming and not back at His having come.....they would also be thinking of the Messiah coming to set up His kingdom for them though and not dying for them),



IV. John was a man God gave a difficult job description, (v. 4-6)

⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet (40:3-5), saying (concerning God preparing the way for the exiled Jews to return to Israel from Babylon):

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness (as is John the Baptist.....[1] crying out **IN** a wilderness land and [2] crying out **TO** the wilderness of the heart):

² Barton, B. B., Veerman, D., Taylor, L. C., & Osborne, G. R. (1997). *Luke*. Life application Bible commentary (63). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

‘Prepare the way of the Lord; (get the people ready to meet their Messiah) make His paths straight. (prepare the heart of the people to be open to Him and His gospel) ⁵ Every valley shall be filled (in) and every mountain and hill brought low (leveled off.....remove the obstacles that would delay the people coming to the Messiah as well that which would turn them away from Him); the crooked places shall be made straight (confront and exhort the people to remove any and all practices of sin in their lives and to press themselves towards holiness) and the rough ways smooth (help the people to resolve any questions or issues of unbelief they may have that the Messiah is really coming); ⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (then the people will have ears to hear and eyes to see the truth of the gospel of Christ and respond to it for salvation).’ ”

V. John was a man God filled with great courage, (v. 7-14)

⁷ Then (as God began drawing people to John) he (John the Baptist) said (bluntly) to the multitudes (around him) that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers (you who are not only filled with poison, but afflict others with your poison.....Matthew identifies these self-righteous poisonous people as the Pharisees and Sadducees)! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come (Who told you your day of punishment was on the horizon? Who got through your thick skulls, causing you to see necessary changes that need to be made now.....or you would soon suffer God’s wrath)? ⁸ Therefore (if you truly have come to receive the baptism of repentance and truly want to escape this wrath to come) bear fruits worthy of repentance (prove you have made the necessary changes in your life and practices.....show God your faith by your works), and do not begin to say (or don’t you dare say) to yourselves, (Oh, we don’t need to make any changes because we will not be punished because our eternal security is sure as) ‘We have Abraham as our father (don’t try to show God your faith by your pedigree.....the merits of Abraham are not your guarantee to God’s blessings and Messianic kingdom).’ For I say to you (I tell you the cold hard truth) that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these (cold, lifeless, common) stones. (which portrays the fact that will be seen later when God provides His blessings and Messianic kingdom to the open hearts of all kinds of sinners, Jews [literal sons of Abraham] and Gentiles [spiritual sons of Abraham] alike.) ⁹ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees (you are all but out of time to move from your pedigree beliefs, to truly and humbly repent of your sins, as we all must do.....leaving our pride, titles and accomplishments behind.....counting as Paul would say later, “what things were

gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" [Phil. 3:7]). Therefore (heed this warning) every tree (every individual, whoever they are) which does not bear good fruit (works of true repentance) is cut down (is brought to the end of his or her earthly life) and thrown into the (judgment) fire."

¹⁰ So the people (in general, watching this unfold and realizing that real conversion leads to "fruits worthy of repentance,"i.e., forsaking a ungodly way of life for a godly one) asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" (We don't want the ax laid to our tree.....we want to bear good fruit.....Tell us what kind of fruit that is!)

¹¹ 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." (Voluntarily share what you have in order to help your neighbor.....the 2nd great commandment)

¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" (Help us to honor God and do this right too!)

¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you (in other words, collecting only what the law requires and your honest wages entail)."

¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely (don't be bullies, thieves or somebody's thug), and be content with your (military) wages."

VI. John was a man of God, not the Son of God, (v. 15-17)

¹⁵ Now as the people were in expectation (that the Messiah was indeed coming soon), and all reasoned (or thought) in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, ¹⁶ John answered (their question), saying to all, "I indeed baptize you (simply) with water (which only has symbolic meaning); but One mightier (One much more significant and qualified) than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose (I am not even worthy of doing the work of a slave for Him, He is so far above me). He (the Christ) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (with all the power and Person of God Himself) and fire ("fire" here has a double meaning [1] who will purge the dross from your person and transform you into the likeness of God Himself.....[2] as well as purge the unbeliever/goats from the believer/lambs when judgment comes).

He who has the Holy Spirit in his heart and the Scriptures in his hands has all he needs.

¹⁷ His (the Messiah's) winnowing fan (or fork) is in His hand (a tool used for the harvest), and He will thoroughly clean (meaning every single husk of chaff and grain of wheat) out His threshing floor (separate the chaff/unbelievers from the wheat/believers), and gather the wheat into His barn (His home); but the chaff He will burn (dispose of) with unquenchable fire (in judgment)."



It is God alone who makes the judicial judgments:

Matthew 7:1 – “Judge not, that you be not judged.

Romans 14:4a – Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls...

The only thing other believers make judgments on are conduct and disputes:

Romans 16:17 – Now I urge you, brethren, note (KJV “mark”.....point or single them out) those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Matthew 7:18–20 – 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. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

1 Corinthians 6:5 – I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

VII. John was a man God allowed to suffer great injustice , (v. 18-20)

¹⁸ (This is not in chronological order now and is almost a parenthetical statement.) And with many other exhortations (urgings and warnings) he preached to the people (we only have a divine sampling of what the Spirit of God led John to preach during the days of his ministry). ¹⁹ But Herod (Antipas) the tetrarch, being rebuked (the grammar here is continuously) by him concerning (his unlawful marriage to) Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and (on top of this) for all the evils which Herod had done (Ouch!), ²⁰ also added (to) this (collection of sin and), above all (i.e., the climax of all Herod's crimes was), that he shut John up in prison (for doing the Lord's will and telling the truth.....he was rewarded as so many other prophets in Israel were rewarded).

³ Barton, B. B., Veerman, D., Taylor, L. C., & Osborne, G. R. (1997). *Luke*. Life application Bible commentary (71). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

VIII. John was a man God needed to be baptized by, (v. 21, 22)

²¹ When all the people were (being) baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized;

Matthew 3:14-16a – And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. ¹⁶ When He (Jesus) had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water (which makes sense because baptize means to dip, plunge, submerge or immerse);



and while He (Jesus) prayed (the words of which we are not given), the heaven was opened (how they were opened we are not told either.....Maybe it was something like what Stephen experienced just prior to his stoning.....Maybe it was just in the sense that it opened its doors to allow the Holy Spirit to descend as the next verse describes). ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily (physical) form like (or resembling) a dove (this time rather than tongues of fire) upon Him (Christ),

There are several things a dove can symbolize other than the Holy Spirit Himself: purity, gentleness, graciousness and peace. Christ was all of these things.

The descending of the Holy Spirit fulfills prophecy concerning the Messiah's anointing for His work:

Isaiah 11:2 – The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 61:1 – “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*;

and a (audible) voice (the voice of God the Father) came from heaven which said, “You are (not have become) My beloved Son (You are of Me); in You I am well pleased.” (in whom I take inexhaustible delight.....God's love towards His children is the same [Psalm 139:17–18 – **How precious also are Your thoughts to me,**

O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.])

God in all three of His Persons is present for the official and prophetic inauguration of Jesus Christ's, the Messiah's ministry.

John's Baptism of Jesus Christ:
Why did Christ "Need" to Be Baptized by John?

What Jesus didn't "need:"

We know it could not be that Jesus Himself had sin in His life He had to confess and repent of.

We know that the typical symbolism of baptism would have no reference to Him either, being sinless.

What Jesus did "need:"

He needed to be baptized to fulfill Scripture:

- Concerning His anointing for beginning His Father's ministry
- Concerning the coming and enabling of the Holy Spirit

He needed to be baptized to identify Himself with repentant sinners:

- He recognizes the need of their repentance (what they are doing is right)
- He identifies Himself not in their sin, but among sinners (He is a friend of sinners)
- He affirms the present means of their purification (true repentance is efficacious)
- He signifies He is the One who is ready to take upon Himself their sin (soon He will take upon Himself, the entire weight and consequences of their sin)

The Genealogy of Christ Through Mary

²³ Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age (this would be about A.D. 26..... and 30 years old being the typical age the priests began serving), being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, *the son* of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, *the son* of Levi, *the son* of Melchi, *the son* of Janna, *the son* of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathiah, *the son* of Amos, *the son* of Nahum, *the son* of Esli, *the son*

of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, *the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah,* ²⁷ the son of Joannas, *the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,* ²⁸ the son of Melchi, *the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er,* ²⁹ the son of Jose, *the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,* ³⁰ the son of Simeon, *the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim,* ³¹ the son of Melea, *the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David,* ³² *the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,* ³³ the son of Amminadab, *the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,* ³⁴ the son of Jacob, *the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,* ³⁵ the son of Serug, *the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,* ³⁶ *the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,* ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, *the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan,* ³⁸ the son of Enosh, *the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

Luke traced David's line through Nathan, whereas Matthew traced it through Solomon.⁴

(Jesus) was not some mystical figure who appeared on the scene for a while, said and did some remarkable things, and then faded into the mist. He was a Jew, born in Bethlehem of Judea to a Jewish couple, Joseph and Mary. He was born "when the fullness of time had come" (Galatians 4:4 nrsv), and he died very publicly one Friday outside Jerusalem. The Christian[s] Messiah is not merely a literary or philosophical character. He is a real person, a real man, someone who understands what it is like to be human. When you pray, you don't have to wonder whether or not he understands. He does.⁵

The genealogy also shows Jesus' legal right to the throne of David.

William Hendriksen makes a very insightful comment about the genealogy of Jesus. He says, "Rightly considered, this genealogy not only teaches us how very close Jesus is to mankind but also how close, in a certain sense, mankind is to God."⁶

4 Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures (Lk 3:24–38)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

5 Barton, B. B., Veerman, D., Taylor, L. C., & Osborne, G. R. (1997). *Luke. Life application Bible commentary (82)*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 11: New Testament commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. New Testament Commentary (225). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

The Divine Objectives of Jesus' Messianic Work

1. His bringing the earth back into subjection to Himself and using it for God's glory (Rev. 4:8b-5:14 – reclaiming the title deed to the earth)

2. His restoring the earth to its pre-fallen state,

(Rom. 8:19-22, NIV) – For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

3. His redeeming God the Father's elect, (Jn. 6:37; Rom. 11:26)

John 6:37 – All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Romans 11:26 – And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

4. His bringing under subjection all the rebels against God

1 Corinthians 15:25 – He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

Revelation 19:19–21 – I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

5. His fulfilling the divine covenant

Genesis 17:8 – I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all **the land** of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Deuteronomy 30:3–5 – the LORD your God **will bring you back from captivity**, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 – “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² **not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers** in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write I it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Hebrews 9:14–15 – How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason **He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death**, for the redemption of the **transgressions under the first covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Why the complete fulfillment of Christ’s Messianic objectives didn’t happen.

Luke 19:41–44 – Now as [Jesus] drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, “**If you had known, even you, especially in this your day**, the things that **make for your peace**! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because **you did not know the time of your visitation**.”

Luke 21:22–24 – For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who

are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles **until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**