

'Luke' - Extra Teaching Points #4

Luke 3:1-38 (NASB)

Luke 3:1-6

*"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, ² in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, **the word of God came to John**, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. ³ And he came into all the district around the Jordan, **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**; ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. ⁵ 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; 6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD."*

18 years has passed since the end of chapter 2.

- In [Luke 2:42](#) Jesus was 12 years old.
- In [Luke 3:23](#) we are told Jesus was about 30 years old.
- John was also about 30 years old... since he was 6 months older than Jesus.

John and Jesus began their ministries in 27AD, and Jesus was crucified in 30AD (or somewhere close to that date).

Extra Info On Fixing Date:

In [Luke 3:1-2](#) Luke gives us enough information to figure out the exact date Jesus and John began their ministries.

- Scholars believe this is the year 27AD.
- The Romans measured the reign of their Caesars starting in the month of September.
- Tiberius became Caesar in the year 14AD.
- Tiberius began his reign in August, so he began his second year as Caesar one month later.

"Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea" when Jesus began His ministry, and when Jesus was crucified.

- Pilate began his governorship in 26AD and remained there until 36AD.

"Herod was tetrarch of Galilee"

- Herod Antipas (son of Herod the great) was tetrarch of Galilee all of Jesus' life, and approximately 6 years after Jesus' death.
- Herod reigned from 4BC (when Herod the Great died) until 39AD.
 - Jesus was born in 4BC just before Herod the Great died.
 - Jesus stood trial before Herod Antipas. (Luke is the only one who records this.)
- This is the same Herod who killed John the Baptist.

Herod's *"brother Phillip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis"*, which was northeast of Herod's jurisdiction.

"Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene."

- It was once thought that Luke was wrong about when Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene.
 - It was known that there was a Lysanias that was tetrarch about 30 years prior to this, but more recently evidence has been found that he either had a second tetrarchy, or there was a second Lysanias that ruled from 4BC to 34AD.
 - Roman historians didn't leave us with much information about lesser known rulers like these... mostly allusions to them or brief references.

"Annas and Caiaphas" were high priests—they shared the office.

- This seems odd because Israel was only allowed one high priest under the Law of Moses.

- Annas became High Priest in 6AD, but Rome considered him too powerful, so they removed him from power in 15AD.
 - Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas, was made High Priest by Rome in 15AD because he was not as popular or politically powerful as Annas.
 - Even though Rome did this, the Jews still considered Annas to be the High Priest.
 - Caiaphas performed most of the official functions of High Priest, but Annas still held a bit of authority as High Priest due to the respect and loyalty of the Jews.
 - When Jesus was arrested they brought Him to the house of Annas first, then to the house of Caiaphas.
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Q: In [Luke 3:2](#) Luke mentions all these important people, then says the “Word of God came to John.” Does anything about this strike you?

- All these important people were around, but the Word of God didn't come to them... instead it came to this guy living out in the desert, eating grasshoppers, and wearing camel hair.
- **God overlooked the principal people in society — the ones you would expect Him to pick — and went to a relative unknown.**
- Similarly, God also chose another obscure nobody who also lived in the desert—Elijah.

In [Luke 3:3](#) John preached “*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

- John preached that people should get baptized as an expression of their repentance.
 - John called on people to turn away from their sins, and the acceptance of his baptism was a sign that they had done this.
 - The purpose was *forgiveness of sins*.
 - Sins were forgiven as a result of repentance, and baptism was the mark that you had repented.
 - Baptism was a public declaration.
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Extra Info On Repentance & Baptism:

Luke is interested in repentance; and his writings contain both the noun ‘repentance’, and the verb ‘repent’ more often than the other three Gospels put together.

Baptism was a rite of cleansing in a number of religions in the first century.

- It seems certain that at this time the Jews used proselyte baptism—a ceremony to cleanse converts from the defilement they saw as characteristic of all Gentiles.
 - This ‘proselyte baptism’ was known as ‘being reborn a Jew’.

The sting in John's practice was that he applied to Jews the ceremony they regarded as suitable for unclean Gentiles.

- John denounces those who expected that, in the judgment, God would deal harshly with Gentile sinners; but that the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, would be safe. He removes this fancied security.

[Acts 19:4-5](#) notes there was a difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism into Jesus.

- John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, pointing to the one who would come after him—Jesus.
- People who received John's baptism were required to be baptized in the Name of Jesus.
 - [1Peter 3:21](#) says baptism is “*the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.*”
 - If “*pledge*” is the right translation of the word “*eperotema*”, (scholars differ), then rebaptism would be understood as a pledge of allegiance specifically to Jesus and His Kingdom.

Repentance and baptism are intrinsically connected and treated almost as the same thing; but which of the two is really for the remission of sins? Is it even beneficial to ask that question?

- [Luke 3:3](#) sounds like repentance is the key, and baptism is the sign that repentance for the remission of sins had taken place.
 - [Acts 22:16](#) sounds more like baptism is what washes away sins... the biggest point in this verse being calling on the Name of the Lord for forgiveness. ([Joel 2:32](#))
 - In the first century, it seems that it was understood “*calling on the Name of the Lord*”, repenting of your sins, and being baptized, were to happen on the same occasion. ([Acts 2:37-38](#))
 - When people believed and repented, they were baptized in rapid succession.
 - They didn’t wait a day... it was all a process of transferring from the world into the Church.
 - People were not considered to be Christians until they were baptized.
 - [Luke 23:40-43](#) records a thief who repented and was forgiven without being baptized.
 - [Matt 27:44](#) and [Mark 15:32](#) record that both thieves were insulting Jesus at first; apparently this thief repented and asked for forgiveness.
 - Although the thief was forgiven of his sins and was allowed to be with Jesus in paradise, he was not added to the Church—God’s invasion force on earth!
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[Luke 3:4-6](#) is a quote from [Isaiah 40:3-5](#), saying John was simply preparing the way for the Lord.

- In Old Testament times, roads were lousy or non-existent. If a King were coming to your town or village, word would be sent ahead for you to make a smooth road fitting for a King’s travel.
 - This is (figuratively) what John was doing.
- **John was telling people to remove the obstacles in their hearts that get in God’s way.**
 - **What obstacles in your heart are preventing you from receiving God properly?**

[Luke 3:7-9](#)

*“So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from **the wrath to come**? ⁸ “Therefore **bear fruits in keeping with repentance**, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you **that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham**. ⁹ “Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

Q: What is “the wrath to come” John speaks of in verse 7.

- We might naturally think of the “wrath to come” as Hell or damnation, but that was not imminent—the end of the world was not imminent; and John sounds like this “wrath” is just about to come.
 - [Luke 3:9](#) “*the ax is already laid at the root of the trees*”
- This is an image of a man with ax in hand measuring his stroke, touching the root, and getting ready to swing.
 - **It seems more than likely John was talking about the judgment that was coming in Israel... it happened 43 years later when the temple was destroyed (70AD).**
- [Mal 4:1-6](#), the last chapter of the Old Testament, records the same warning and promises to send Elijah to turn people from the destruction.
 - In [Matt 11:14](#), Jesus said if people could accept it, John was Elijah who was to come.
 - **John’s coming was the sign that the curse on the Land was about to strike. ([Mal 4:6](#))**

In [vs. 8](#) John tells them to bear “*fruits of repentance*”, and not to think they are safe just because they are Jews.

- “*Fruits of repentance*” are manifested as changes in behavior. ([Acts 26:19-20](#))
 - It’s easy to say, “*I repent*” or apologize to avoid punishment, but John was saying it’s not that easy... there needs to be evidence that the heart has changed. ([Luke 6:45](#))
 - Repentance is the core of John’s message, Paul’s message, and Jesus’ message ([Matt 4:17](#)).
- **Before one repents, the attitude toward sin is to excuse it, justify it, or rationalize it. Repentance stops all that, and makes sin unacceptable... regardless of circumstance, or**

how much worse someone else might be. The heart and mind changes in regard to sin.

- Repentance doesn't mean you never sin again, but it **does** mean you never **want** to sin again... you never justify your sin.
 - Your aim is to please God, not yourself.
- Sin is an offense to God. Why would you want to offend someone you love?

Q: What do you do when you sin? Do you make excuses for it?

- If so, then you haven't really changed your mind about sin yet... you haven't really repented properly.
 - If you excuse your sin, you will never resist the urges to commit the sin.

They thought that, since they were descended from Abraham, they were in a special class of people. But God doesn't have grandchildren... He only has children!

- You have to be a child of God to be on good terms with God.
 - It doesn't help to have a parent or grandparent who's a child of God... that doesn't say anything about you.
- **People still have a habit of relying on being in the right group or heritage to put them on good terms with God.**
 - **Some still think being a Jew matters.**
 - **Some think being in the right church or denomination matters.**

[Luke 3:10-14](#)

*"And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" ¹¹ And he would answer and say to them, "**The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.**" ¹² And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³ And he said to them, "**Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.**" ¹⁴ Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "**Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.**"*

Here we get a unique look at John's teaching that isn't found in the other gospels.

In [vs. 11](#), John is preaching the same principle that was behind the gathering of manna ([Ex 16:17-20](#)).

- **No one was to have too much, and no one was to have too little.**
 - The same principle is applied by Paul in [2Cor 9:6-8](#).
- This is really just another way of saying, "*Love your neighbor as yourself*" ([Lev 19:18](#); [Matt 19:19](#); [Matt 23:39](#)).
 - In the Bible, love is seen in what you do, more than in what you feel. What do you do for yourself? Do you feed, clothe, and take care of yourself? Then, do that for others!

In [vs. 13](#), you might think John would have told the tax collectors to quit that job; but instead he told them not to collect more than they should.

- Tax collectors often collected more than the Romans required, to increase their own wealth.
 - Apparently, John thought it was acceptable to work for the government – even the Roman government – as long as you didn't cheat!

In [vs. 14](#), John didn't tell the soldiers they couldn't be soldiers... but he did tell them not to intimidate, and extort money; something which Roman soldiers did routinely.

Extra Info On John's Ministry:

In Josephus' "The Antiquities of the Jews", book 18, chapter 5, paragraph 2, Josephus speaks about John:

- *Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [for the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.*
 - Josephus is an entirely different voice – not connected to the Bible or Christianity – who confirms the Biblical account of John.
 - It is interesting that Josephus doesn't attribute John's death to his confronting Herod's adultery, but rather to Herod's fear of John's influence.
 - John's denouncing of Herod's adultery probably wouldn't have bothered Herod much if John were not so influential.
 - **It is also interesting that Josephus saw John's baptism as a sign of remission of ALL sins, based on thorough repentance beforehand.**
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Luke 3:15-17

*"Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and **I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** ¹⁷ "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

Vs. 16 "I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals"

- Slaves were assigned the duty of taking off the master's sandals.
 - John is saying, "You think I'm something? Wait till you meet this guy. I'm not even worthy of being one of His slaves."

Q: What is "baptism of fire?"

- Matt 3:10-12 is the parallel, but leaves out John's teaching in verses 10-14.
 - Matthew sees all 3 statements about "fire" as being connected.
- **"Baptism of fire" is like the other 2 references to fire; it is a bad judgment against some.**
 - John is saying, when Jesus comes, there will be 2 different baptisms: 1 for the faithful, and 1 for the apostate.
 - Jesus will immerse (overwhelm) one group with the Holy Spirit; the other group Jesus will immerse in fiery judgment.
 - **Fire is not a positive thing to anticipate... it's a negative thing. It's where the fruitless trees and the chaff will go.**

Q: What is the "unquenchable fire" in Luke 3:17?

- The prophets speak of the judgment of God on Israel, brought through the Babylonians, as a fire that will not be quenched.
 - Jer 7:20, 17:27; Ezk 20:47-48 "unquenchable fire."
- **"Unquenchable" or "Shall not be quenched" is not the same as "shall never go out."**

- To quench a fire is to put it out. “Unquenchable fire” speaks to the inability of anyone to put it out... not to how long the will fire last.
- This most likely is not a reference to the fires of Hell, but rather the judgment of God against the apostate.
 - No one will be able to resist this judgment!

Luke 3:18-22

*“So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. ¹⁹ But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, ²⁰ Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.” (**This is not in chronological order, but Luke must have thought it appropriate to mention Herod’s response to John’s preaching.) ²¹“Now when all the people were baptized, **Jesus was also baptized**, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”*

Q: If Jesus had no sin, why did He need to be baptized by John?

- Jesus intended to publicly identify himself with John’s message and with the revival movement it had created; to enroll as a member of the purified and prepared people of God.
- Matt 3:13-17 records Jesus’ baptism, but gives Jesus’ reason for being baptized— to “fulfill all righteousness.”

Q: Can someone refuse to be baptized and still fulfill all righteousness?

Luke 3:23-38

“When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, 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 Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Joshua, 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 Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, 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 Admin, 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 Heber, 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 Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

Matthew 1:16 records a different genealogy than Luke.

- Matthew records Joseph’s genealogy (Matt 1:16).
 - Matthew records all the Kings in the lineage, making it clear that Joseph descended directly down the line of Israel’s Kings... all the way back to David!
- Luke’s genealogy does not go through the kingly line.
 - It doesn’t go through David’s son Solomon, but rather through David’s son Nathan, who was never King of Israel (Luke 3:31).

The words “son of” in Luke 3:23, is the Greek word *huios*, which is used very widely of immediate, remote, or figurative kinship.

- After verse 23, the words “son of” do not appear in the Greek; they are inserted by translators to help carry the thought in English.
- The Greek would read, “...Jesus was regarded to be Joseph’s son, but in fact, he was of Eli.”
 - Eli or Heli was Mary’s father.

Follow Up Assignment

Q: John was telling people to remove the obstacles in their hearts that get in God's way.

- Are there any obstacles in your heart preventing you from receiving God properly?

Q: Before one repents, the attitude toward sin is to excuse it, justify it, or rationalize it. Repentance stops all that, and makes sin unacceptable.

- When someone suggests to you that you may have sinned or might be falling into a sin, how do you tend to respond? (Circle the ones that apply)
 - Try to excuse it
 - Try to justify it
 - Try to rationalize it
 - Consider whether or not the action in question is consistent with serving Jesus.
- Does your answer to this give you any insights into how you should answer the first question?

Q: The Jews relied heavily on being 'descendants of Abraham' to qualify them as God's people. Have you ever tried to rely on your relationship to someone else, to make you acceptable to God?

- If God has no grandchildren – only children – what does that tell you about your relationship to other believers? To influential leaders? To particular churches or denominations?