

CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 5, 2025 • WEEK 4



LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS

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Theme Verse

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



Baptism & the Son of Man



THERE ARE MANY MANIFESTATIONS of revival going on around our country and our world: prayer meetings on Ivy League college campuses; personal testimonies and even testimony services with various college football teams, including the number-one Ohio State University football team; large evangelistic meetings in Africa, South America, and elsewhere. People are making professions of faith, which are then followed by water baptisms in demonstration of the genuineness of their faith in Jesus. In today's study we will look at three different baptisms that occur in the third chapter of Luke: one deals with repentance, another focuses on the act of anointing, and the final one is done for the purpose of identification.

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INTRODUCTION

Luke 3:1-2

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, ²in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.¹

History gives us details about the rulers listed in verses 1 and 2. Tiberius Caesar was Roman emperor from AD 14 to AD 37, so the fifteenth year of his reign would be somewhere between AD 27 and AD 29. He was known for being an extremely cruel dictator. Pilate governed Judea from AD 26/27 through AD 36/37. The Jews were often in conflict with him. Herod and Philip were sons of wicked Herod the Great, whom we talked about in an earlier study. They received their “kingdoms” when their father’s kingdom was distributed after his death. Philip married Herodias, who later divorced him and married Herod. Philip eventually married his niece Salome, daughter of Herodias. Mark 6:14-29 tells the story of Salome, at Herodias’ command, requesting (and receiving) the head of John the Baptist from Herod. Little is known about Lysanias other than that his kingdom was northwest of Damascus. Though Annas was removed from being high priest by Rome, He still greatly controlled his sons and a son-in-law, Caiaphas, all who succeeded him in that position. Herod, Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas, all played a part in the execution of Jesus. Just like in much of our world today, wicked leaders ruled in both the country and the “church.”

I. THE BAPTISM OF JOHN: REPENTANCE

A. John’s Preparation

Luke 3:3-6

And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; ⁴as 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. ⁵Every ravine will be filled, And every mountain and hill will be brought low; The crooked will become straight, And the rough roads smooth; ⁶And all flesh will see the salvation of God.’”

The last verse of Luke chapter 1 says that John the Baptist “continued to grow and become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.” There is a lot of desert/wilderness area at the north end of the Jordan River where it flows into the Dead Sea. This is likely the setting for this chapter. Why John lived in the desert is unknown. Perhaps his elderly parents died, and he really had no home. Maybe God drove him into the wilderness. His time alone in the desert appears to have solidified his relationship with God as well as his understanding of his mission—to prepare the way of the Lord. Whatever the reason, he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5.



It was often the case that a ruler entering desert area would send workers ahead of his caravan to prepare his way and announce his arrival. The terrain was frequently rough with boulders, ravines, and winding paths—many hindrances. The workers’ job was to make the way smooth (“straight”) as well as herald the coming of their leader. This was John’s job—“to prepare the nation for the Messiah and then present the Messiah to them (Luke 1:16–17, 76–77; John 1:6–8, 15–34). He rebuked their sins and announced God’s salvation, for without conviction there can be no conversion.”²

B. John’s Preaching

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.”

Imagine what it was like to see this man, John—long hair, camel robe, and leather belt. The Jewish people who knew the Scriptures would automatically recognize him as a prophet. 2 Kings 1:8 describes the prophet Elijah as “a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.” This is probably why crowds came out to see and hear him. Some of the Jews, including church leaders, believed their heritage as Jews, children of Abraham, was good enough to get them to heaven. They had no need for repentance. John calls them out. They are like snakes trying to slither away from the fire. They need to repent and show forth good fruit because judgment *will* come.

John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance in expectation of the coming Messiah. “Baptism was nothing new to the people, for the Jews baptized Gentile proselytes. But John baptized *Jews*, and this was unusual. Acts 19:1–5 explains that John’s baptism *looked forward* to the coming of the Messiah, while Christian baptism *looks back* to the finished work of Christ.”³

C. John’s Teaching

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.”





When the people came to be baptized of John, they knew their lives had to change. “Today we have become very superficial, believing repentance to be nothing more than a quiet apology to God. Scripturally, it involves a total change of mindset, life and direction.”⁴

John takes time to teach these new believers. He starts by telling them, “Look around for people in need. Meet that need. Meeting the needs of others will likely mean giving up something of yours.” He continues with the tax collectors, those typically scorned by the Jewish people because of their dishonesty. “Be honest in your dealings. Just do what your boss says. Don’t cheat the people.” To soldiers he says, “Be kind. Don’t make up accusations to get what you want. Be content with what you have.”⁵

“Those today who have repented and whose lives are an inviting highway for the Lord give of their resources, substance, and time to others. Moreover, they live in a constant Holy-Spirit-directed spirit of repentance. They repent of lovelessness, impatience, meanness, harshness, prejudice, jealousy, hatred, unbelief, prayerlessness, coldness, selfishness, and much more. These people live in the refreshing air of the forgiveness of sins. They are guilt-free. They are clear-eyed. Their countenances are an invitation to all mankind to tread the highway of God’s salvation.”⁶

II. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke 3:15-18

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, ¹⁶John 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. ¹⁷His 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.” ¹⁸So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.

Apparently, the people were beginning to think that John might be the Messiah. John quickly and humbly squelches that by saying that Someone much mightier than he is coming. Someone Who will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. Someone whose shoes John was not worthy to untie. Notice the humility of John.

There was another baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Those who come to Jesus in faith, believing that He is the only way for them to have their sins forgiven and gain entrance into heaven, receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This began at Pentecost (Acts 1:5) and continues to this day (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The fire points to a time of judgment (verses 9 and 17). This could have been referring to the coming destruction of Jerusalem, but the words “unquenchable fire” also undoubtedly refer to the Day of Judgement at the Great White Throne. This baptism of fire will be for all the unrepentant unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15).



“Spiritually speaking, the nation of Israel was living in a ‘wilderness’ of unbelief, and the roads to spiritual reality were twisted and in disrepair. The corruption of the priesthood (instead of one, there were *two* high priests!) and the legalistic hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had weakened the nation spiritually. The people desperately needed to hear a voice from God, and John was that faithful voice... John rejoiced at the opportunity of introducing people to the Saviour, and then getting out of the way.”⁷ “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Luke 3:19-20

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.

John was bold in rebuking sin and offering hope to the sinner. He was faithful to the end of his life.

III. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

A. The Son’s Submission

Luke 3:21

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened...

“Only Luke mentions that Jesus was praying, and this was only one of many occasions (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 23:34, 46). As the perfect Son of man, Jesus depended on His Father to meet His needs, and that was why He prayed.”⁸

Why was Jesus baptized? Jesus’ baptism was “the official start of His ministry (Acts 1:21–22; 10:37–38). He was ‘about thirty years of age’ (Luke 3:23), and the Jewish Levites began their work at age thirty (see Num. 4:3, 35).” But that was not the main reason He was baptized. We know it was not for repentance of sin. Jesus was the perfect, sinless Son of God. Matthew gives more detail about Jesus’ baptism. He tells us that John at first resisted baptizing Jesus, saying he needed Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus asked him to “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:14–16). Jesus’ baptism was a picture of His death, burial, and resurrection, which would provide righteousness for every repentant sinner. Jesus was identifying with sinners. He was identifying with us. He would one day bear our sin, paying for it with His life. He would exchange His righteousness for our sins, and He would rise again to give eternal life to all those who believe.

B. The Spirit’s Anointing & the Father’s Authentication

Luke 3:22

...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.”



“In the muddy Jordan waters, the Trinity appeared before all humanity. You could see the Spirit. You could hear the Father. You could touch the Son. Jesus’ mission to bring heaven to earth had begun.”⁹

CONCLUSION

The remaining verses in Luke chapter 3 give us the genealogy Jesus, whom many believe is through Mary, going from Mary backward to Adam. Matthew likely gives His genealogy through Joseph, moving forward from Abraham to Joseph. “God takes us to the First Adam and then to the Second Adam. From the first man to the second Man. And he employs 75 names in doing so. God always has a tender love for people, especially His own, and He likes to write them in His Book.”¹⁰



Chaplain Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
- 2, 3, 5, 7, 8. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Victor Books, 1996, Vol. 1, pg. 180-182.
4. Gavin Childress, *Opening up Luke’s Gospel*, Day One Publications, 2006, pg. 21.
6. R Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Crossway Books, 1998, pg. 106-114.
9. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Origination of Something Glorious*, Insight for Living, Word Publishing, 1994, pg. 80.
10. John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke: An Expository Commentary*, Kregel Publications, WORDsearch Corp, 2009.



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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the
109th Legislature’s
First Session

SENATORS

6:45 – 7:45 A.M.
Wednesdays
Capitol Office #1004

STAFF

12:00 – 1:00 P.M.
Wednesdays
NE State Office Building
Morrill Room