

## Luke 3

### PREPARE THE WAY

*“What should we do? Prepare our hearts and lives for God’s mission*

Did you receive any earth-shattering news in 2023? Or can you recall a time where someone shared some rather gripping news to you? It stopped you in your tracks and your response was - What am I supposed to do? Did it cause you to change course or set a new course? We all have these moments.

Personal story.....Grew up in a Christian family, mom and dad helped start a church plant, got baptized at age 13, church council at age 16, went to college on track scholarship. However many of the college professors challenged my belief in God and made it their mission to create doubt. That was earth-shattering news – I was out of my element. I will talk about how that ended later – BUT

Today we are going to hear from prophet of God who had some earth shattering news for some folks - not the news they were expecting, but earth shattering nonetheless.

We are continuing our sermon series in the Gospel of Luke and I am excited to present Luke 3 to you today. Are you excited? Well you should be excited about something, this is after all New Year's Eve.

I find the writer Luke completely fascinating and intriguing in terms of his perspective, his writing style, and his scholarly approach.

There are some important **themes throughout the Gospel of Luke.**

- **silence is broken** in terms of the announcement of the coming of the Messiah. Breaking over 400 years of silence from the last words of prophet Malachi until the proclamation Gabriel. The proclamation is that John would be the next prophet and forerunner to the Messiah.
- **Jesus Christ is the Messiah, which is good news for everyone**, including outcasts and outsiders.
- **Jesus Christ as Messiah is the center of history** not just a person or place within it.
- **Christ’s mission to seek and save the lost, Luke 19:10.**
- Copious reports of Jesus in **prayer** and the active role the **Holy Spirit. (5 min)**

**Prayer**

### Luke 3:1

**1**It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas(an-tuh-puhs) was ruler<sup>a</sup> over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler<sup>b</sup> over Iturea (It-urea) and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. **2**Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests.

Luke provides a very detailed political-geographical reference in history that frames our story. Roman political structure and reorganization of Judea; corruption and cruelty.

Jewish religious structure had two high Priests, counter to the Levitical law; so the religious structure has elements of corruption.

### The “Word of God came”

#### Luke 3:2-6

At this time a message (“**Word of God came**” NIV, NAS) from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. **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 (a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins NIV, NAS) **4**Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, NLT

*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.”<sup>c</sup>*

#### Isaiah 40-3-5

- “**Word of God came**” **John** is the prophet spoken of 400 years earlier by the prophet Malachi and the Propjet Isaiah 300 years prior to that. Miraculous birth by Elizabeth; same time period as Mary.
- **Prepare the Way** - For Luke, history revolves around Jesus and John was the “hinge” that history turned – the culmination of the law and the prophets but heralded the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God and the Messiah.
- **ALL People will see** the salvation sent from God. Not just the Jews or the privileged or the religious or the educated.

## Who is John The Baptist

- A sharp contrast to those Roman and Jewish officials described in verse 1.
- John the Baptist appears in all four of the gospels. NLT commentary in John 1:6- 15
- Sported Camel hair and subsisting on locust and honey Mark 1:6
- Jesus said; among those born of women, there is no one greater than John 7:28
- Wilderness dweller, rugged, fully bearded because of Nazarite vow
- Not a temple preacher, not a street preacher, a countryside preacher
- We know he is well known among many world religions.
- Wikipedia says, John is mentioned by the [Roman Jewish](#) historian [Josephus](#)<sup>[25]</sup> and he is revered as a major religious figure<sup>[26]</sup> in Christianity, Islam, the [Bahá'í faith](#),<sup>[27]</sup> the [Druze faith](#), and [Mandaeism](#), the latter in which he is considered to be the final and most vital prophet. He is considered to be a [prophet](#) of [God](#) by all of the aforementioned faiths. Wikipedia

## Luke 3:7-9

When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, *"You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the 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."***

## Message of repentance and baptism

Strait talk (hell, fire and brimstone). Stopped people in their tracks. People were coming for John's baptism to escape impending judgement – but John's message was one of repentance (turning away from sin), thus the harsh words.

John's call for the people to repent indicated that they needed to **change their minds and actions**. (e.g., [Matthew 4:17](#)) God required that the people have a true, internal righteousness that they didn't yet possess.

He let the people know that God is establishing a **different kind** of kingdom **more inclusive** than the "chosen people" from Abraham's seed. This is shocking news. No auto-renewals. No passes. People thought they were righteous and would have access to the kingdom of God because of their relationship to Abraham and Moses and because of their **outward obedience** to the laws God had given Israel through Moses.

Lastly, he equated bearing good fruit as evidence of right-living and lack of it is judgement.

## Crowd response to the word of GOD? V10 **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." **Crowd -Sharing and benevolence**

**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." **Tax Collectors -Honesty and fairness**

**14** "What should we do?" asked some soldiers.

John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay." **Soldiers - Justice and contentment.**

Practical words for ordinary people. Hard preaching and honest response. Don't hear much of that type of preaching anymore, except maybe on TBN or daystar channel. Many people say that style doesn't resonate with them very much, some would say it repulses them. I would imagine that's the same thing that the religious people said during the time of John. However, it appears some of the **irreligious we're responding** openly and favorable as they knew very well what their indiscretions were.

John did not concern himself with how he thought people would receive his message. Was not concerned about hurting feelings. Because - the **word of God** came to John, son of a nobody to preach to everybody.

**3:15** "the people were

## ***"Waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts"***

if John might possibly be the Messiah.'

Waiting, expectantly, for a Messiah to come. Centuries of waiting; thousands, millions waiting for the Messiah to come. **Expectation building!!!** Now one comes out of the hills and out of the bushes; brash, wearing animal skins and eating locust and honey. Shouting out insults and yet ripping out their hearts.

John rightly tells them he is not the Messiah, nor is he worthy to be associated with Messiah,

**3:16** *I will baptize you with water, but someone is coming soon who is greater than I 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.***

**Contrast John's baptism...**John's baptism symbolizes repentance and cleansing, but actually doesn't.

- Its roots are in the purification rites prescribed in Leviticus designed for unclean and gentile converts.
- Amazingly, Jews were getting baptized, identifying with the unclean and the Gentiles. This had not happened before!
- John **prepared the way** for Christ and **foreshadowed** the work of Christ by calling people to acknowledge their sin and **their need for salvation**. His baptism was a purification ceremony meant to **ready the peoples' hearts** to receive their Savior.

### **Baptism after Jesus's death burial and resurrection...in ACTS**

- Baptism as we practice today is one's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- It is representative of a cleansing that is complete and a commitment that is the response of one who has been made new in Jesus Christ. His sacrifice on the cross completely washes away our sins, and we are raised to new life empowered by the Holy Spirit ([2 Corinthians 5:17-21](#); [Romans 6:1-11](#)).
- John rightly prophesies the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is to come at Pentecost; to be later described by Luke in more detail in his book of The Acts.

John withholds nothing in his preaching. Calls out king Herod for unrighteousness. Now we have a case study about appropriate preaching methods...Speaking the truth got him killed.

So, **why again** were people coming to John in the wilderness? I think there was a **void** between what they saw and heard and what was practiced in the temple. People went to the temple to hear the word of God – but did they? People were starving for truth and were waiting expectantly; longing for a messenger with the message of truth – even if the message hurt. So, the people acknowledged John as God's true messenger. God will send his messenger to get the word out!!!

Are we facing a similar situation today? Are our preachers in our churches receiving the word of God and preaching the word of God? If not would we not expect a void as well? Between what they're hearing in the pulpit and what they're receiving expectantly in their hearts.

### **Baptism of Jesus. 3:21-23**

*One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized*

First recorded appearance of Jesus since he was 12 in the temple.

The occasion, people were being baptized by John, the forerunner in the river Jordan

### Why did Jesus get baptized by John?

- John, chosen by God as the forerunner; prophet and son of a priest
- Connection with humanity – fully human- identify with sinful people
- Not for repentance of sins, sinless
- Personal act of obedience AND humility to the Father
- Pivotal point – the beginning of ministry
- Modeling, testimony for others
- Last three are the same reasons all followers of Jesus should get baptized.

*. As he was **praying**, the **heavens opened**, 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, you bring me great joy.*

Something amazing happened as **Jesus was praying**, heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended...

Two other times a “voice from heaven” is recorded Transfiguration 9:35 and in Temple courts in final week John 12:28) However this is a unique and vivid glimpse of **All three in one place, all three distinct, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Divine affirmation “this is MY SON!”**

### Genealogy of Jesus.

**23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.**

- Parallels the genealogy provided in the Gospel of Matthew. Yet the two differ in terms of how they approach writing the lineage.
- Matthew’s genealogy starts with Abraham and ends with Jesus. More of an emphasis of the Abrahamic covenant and heritage of the Jewish people. Also traces the lineage more through Joseph.
- Conversely Luke’s genealogy begins with Jesus and as traced back to Adam. Luke presents Jesus Christ as Messiah as the center of history. All of history revolves around the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ. This is how the author connects Jesus with all humanity and creation. Interestingly Luke provides a genealogy through the lineage of Mary.
- Both genealogies are complete and correct, in spite of some skeptics and doubters looking for discrepancies and or contradictions. However, all of these questions have been addressed by scholars most familiar with Jewish history, genealogy.
- - **Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the center of history**
  - **Jesus Christ is the Messiah for all people**
  - **The Word of God has come**
  - **The silence has been broken**

## **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING EXPECTANTLY FOR AND WHAT ARE YOU WONDERING IN YOUR HEART?**

### **What are you expecting out of 2024?.....**

For me back in college, when challenged with the idea and teaching of no God, I prayed to God for understanding and to be surrounded by people who loved God. I was waiting expectantly for understanding and fellowship.

A friend gave me a Bible in a reader- friendly translation; read it cover to cover while in graduate school and working part time. God opened my mind, gave me more than just a general understanding and insight, church leaders acknowledged this and allowed me to start a college career campus ministry at the church. Grew into many Bible studies, events and activities at church, people's homes and on the University of Oklahoma campus including baptisms in the water fountains and swimming pools.

This was a turning point -began a lifestyle of ministry at age 24 that continues and continues to build to this very day.

### **SO, in this new year WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

- Beyond New Year's resolutions. This isn't about what you want to achieve for yourself. Its about **what God is preparing His way for you.**  
**What are you waiting expectantly for?**
- John's message was strait talk for those with hardened hearts.
- The proper response is brokenness – repentance - obedience – humility
- The good new is Jesus came to bear our sin, our shame and our penalty for our sin.
- Maybe this all new to you? Your first step is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Romans 3;23...

**You need a Savior** who offers mercy and grace from the penalty and bondage of sin and wash away the sin forever. So, receive this mercy and grace. He is your HOPE!

**You need a LORD to follow in obedience and direction.** This is your Hope!

- Make your decision known – Jesus said - anyone who acknowledges me publicly on earth, I will also acknowledge before my father in heaven. Matt 10:32
- all who declare that Jesus is the son of God, have God living in them, and they live in God. I John 4:15

If Christ is your Savior and LORD, your challenge is to follow His Way.

- Practically - For many of us it begins with our attitude and expectation of Sunday morning **Worship**. Here and now. Worship is the whole service, the whole morning; parking lot to parking lot. Are you expecting see worship? Experience worship? Or **give**

worship? **So, what should we do?** Give your worship mind, body and soul; not for the benefits or rewards – it is expected.

- For some of us the next step is **baptism**. Why not now?
- For some, you need fellowship, encouragement and accountability. We call these **Life Groups**. Sign up TODAY!

***WHAT ARE YOU WAITING EXPECTANTLY FOR AND WHAT ARE YOU WONDERING IN YOUR HEART for 2024?***

**God has prepared you mind and heart for ministry and mission. How will you respond?**

**Prayer**