

# LUKE

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## Chapter Three

Luke now presents the ministry of John the Baptist and the human ancestry of Jesus through Joseph.

### 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, (2) in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.*

We know that Augustus died on August 19, AD 14 so the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar would be August AD 28-August AD 29. Pilate held his office from AD 26-36 so he was governor at the stated date. Herod is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great who became tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea when his father died in 4 BC and he remained in that office until AD 39. The word tetrarch technically means a ruler over a fourth of a territory but it did not always mean that precisely. Nothing more is known about Lysanias although Abilene is north of the other regions mentioned by Luke. Annas was high priest from AD 6-15 and five of his sons became high priest after Annas was deposed by a Roman governor. Caiaphas held the office from AD 18-36 and was the son-in-law of Annas. Apparently Luke means that Caiaphas was officially the high priest but Annas still held some authority. When Jesus was arrested He was first brought before Annas. Stating that the word of God came to John is a way that Luke states that John was in a true prophet position at this time.

### Luke 3:3-6

*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.'"*

Luke then states that John traveled around in the Jordan valley, which is 120 kilometers long and 15 kilometers wide. It runs from Lake Tiberius in the north to northern Dead Sea in the south. It runs for an additional 155 kilometers south of the Dead Sea to Aqaba. It is a rich area as shown in the following pictures with one showing a baptismal site on the Jordan River:



Luke does not mention any of the appearances or dietary habits of John as does Matthew and Mark but proceeds straight to the message of John. The baptism was a ceremony that followed repentance as a sign that the person has repented. The purpose of this repentance and turning away from a life of sign was forgiveness. The Jews used proselyte baptism when a Jewish convert was cleansed from the defilement of being a Gentile. But John applied this baptism to Jews as well as Gentiles so he was removing the false security of the Jews who thought that they were safe from the judgment of God by being a descendent of Abraham.

All four Gospels apply Isaiah 40:3 to John but only Luke adds verses 4-5. All the Gospels apply the work of John to being preparatory to the coming of the Messiah but Luke paints a complete picture of John's work as making a road before the coming of a king to the climax when all flesh will see the salvation of the Lord. Of course seeing the salvation does not mean receiving the salvation as most will reject the salvation of the Lord. Luke does make it clear that this salvation is for all mankind and not just for the Jews.

### **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."*

Matthew mentions the Pharisees and Sadducees in the group but Luke mentions the multitudes as a total. Luke's words are almost identical to those of Matthew:

*Matt 3:7-10 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; (9) and do not suppose that you can 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. (10) "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

He categorizes the crowd as a brood of vipers trying to flee from the wrath to come. He warns them to not depend upon any relationship to Abraham for God could cause the stones to be

raised up as children of Abraham. In other words, they had nothing to do with the physical nature of their existence and they had no personal characteristics that would make them worthy of mercy from God. He goes further to state that the ax is ready to cut down any trees that do not bring forth good fruit. The implication here is that Israel is soon to receive judgment from God so even the physical descendants of Abraham are subject to that judgment.

### **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."*

The Jewish leader would reject the teaching of John: *But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.* (Luke 7:30) However other people asked John penetrating questions. They wanted to know what they needed to do to avert this coming judgment and John answered first in a very pragmatic manner. He told them that they needed to share what they had with those who did not have needed clothes or food. The taxing of the people was done by Rome with a process of bidding. People wanting to be tax collectors would bid a certain amount of money and the person who bid the highest amount would be awarded the position of tax collector. They would then tax the people at a rate that would exceed the amount they bid so that they could make a profit and cover their expenses. However many people would levy much more tax than needed for a reasonable profit and this process provoked considerable resentment among the people toward these people. Evidently some of these tax collectors felt a condemnation from the preaching of John and so asked him what they should do to avert God's judgment. John told them to only collect what they were supposed to collect.

Another group of people were also touched by John's preaching. This was a group of soldiers although Luke does not say if they were Jewish or Roman soldiers. These soldiers were evidently associated with the tax collectors to give some "muscle" to their collecting taxes from the general public. They could also have been falsely accusing people of crimes and taking payments from them to keep from being thrown into jail for the crimes. Luke quotes John as telling them to not take money from anyone by force and to not falsely accuse anyone. They are to be content with the wages they are paid. Note that John did not tell the tax collectors or the soldiers to quit their jobs but to do them properly with clear consciences.

### **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, (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." (18) So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.*

Luke reports that John replied to them similarly as quoted by the apostle John:

*John 1:25-28 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" (26) John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. (27) "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." (28) These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

John then repudiated the concept that he was the Messiah. We need a bit of background about the loosing of the sandal to understand what John meant. Palestinian teachers were not paid but their pupils were to perform services for the teacher except for the loosing of his sandal-thong for that was considered too menial a task for a disciple. John's statement that he was unworthy to loosen the sandal-thong of Jesus was then a statement of extreme humility. John also made a point about his baptism that was only with water. Stating the Jesus would baptize with the Spirit and fire meaning that they will be strengthened with the Holy Spirit and purified as though by fire.

Verses 17 and 18 both deal with judgment. Winnowing was the process of separating the wheat from the chaff. A winnowing fork was used to throw the grain into the air and the wind would drive away the chaff with the grain falling straight down. The threshing floor was then cleared with the wheat being brought into the barn and the chaff burned with unquenchable fire. This statement emphasizes the completeness of judgment for without knowing that evil will be overthrown is ultimately not good news. Luke then states that John used many other exhortations to preach the gospel to the people.

### **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 a fearless preacher of the word of God so he did not hesitate to reprimand Herod who had married his brother's wife. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, half-brother of Herod Antipas. She was married to Herod, another half-brother and a private citizen. Herod persuaded Herodias to leave her husband and marry him even though he had to also divorce his wife. Luke mentions that Herod had done other wicked things that are not mentioned by Matthew and Mark in their account of this situation (Matt 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-28). Luke then adds to this list of wickedness by saying that Herod also locked John in prison. Josephus informs us that this prison was in the fortress Machaerus that is a fortified hilltop palace located in Jordan fifteen miles (24 km) southeast of the mouth of the Jordan river on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. According to Flavius Josephus, it is the location of the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist. According to the chronology of the Bible, this infamous execution took place in 32 AD shortly before the Passover, following an imprisonment of two years. The picture below is of the fortress with the Dead Sea in the background (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machaerus>).



Luke is not adding this information chronologically for John did continue his ministry during the early portions of the ministry of Jesus. He is finishing his account of the work of John and will then concentrate on the ministry of Jesus.

### **Luke 3:21-22**

*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."*

Luke begins his narrative of the ministry of Jesus with His baptism and His blessing by God the Father. John's baptism was for repentance and Jesus had no sin so there was no need for him to be baptized by John. However Jesus wanted to identify with the sinners whom He came to save from their sins. He would, at the cross, take the sins of all those whom He would save even though He had never committed a sin. Thus His baptism looks forward to the time when He would take all of those sins upon Him for judgment from the Father. Jesus gave His reason as recorded by Matthew: *But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.* (Matt 3:15). Many pictures exist of the dove coming upon Jesus while He was being baptized but Luke states that this event occurred while He was praying, which would have been after the baptism. All four of the Gospels mention the descent of the Spirit as a dove with Matthew and Mark stating that Jesus saw it and John states that John the Baptist saw it:

*Matt 3:16-17 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, (17) and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*

Mark 1:10-11 *Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; (11) and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

John 1:32-34 *John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. (33) "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' (34) "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

Each may have been stating this event in a subjective sense but Luke stating that He Holy Spirit descended in bodily form would be stating it as an objective reality. The symbolism has puzzled many people for the dove was not an accepted symbol of the Holy Spirit but it was a symbol of Israel.

### **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.*

Luke gives the age of Jesus in a very approximate form and He may have been in His mid-thirties. Luke now gives his rendering of the birth origin of Jesus from Adam to demonstrate the human nature of Jesus as the second Adam. Also note that Luke ends the list by stating that Adam was the son of God since Adam was created by God and not born in a normal human event. Matthew starts with Abraham to demonstrate the Jewish ancestry of Jesus:

*Matt 1:1-18 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: (2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. (3) Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. (4) Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of*

*Salmon. (5) Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. (6) Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. (7) Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. (8) Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. (9) Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. (10) Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. (11) Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (12) After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. (13) Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. (14) Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. (15) Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. (16) Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. (17) So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations. (18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew wrote to a largely Jewish audience and Luke wrote to a mainly Gentile audience (Theophilus) so there should be differences due to the different emphasis of each writer. The differences in names of the two genealogies have been explained by three assumptions: 1.) Matthew gives the legal lineage of Jesus from Solomon and Joseph and Luke gives the lineage relating to Mary. 2.) Matthew traces the legal line and Luke gives the actual line of descent. 3.) There was a levirate marriage at one or more points in the lineages. The widow of a childless man could marry his brother so that a child of the second marriage could legally be considered as the son of the deceased man to perpetuate his name. So in a genealogy involving a levirate marriage, the child could be listed under his natural or his legal father. If Jesus had been a legal son of Mary without her being married to Joseph, He would have had no legal right to the throne. Thus the genealogy of Matthew presents Jesus as having the legal right to the throne of David.