

# Luke 3 Commentary

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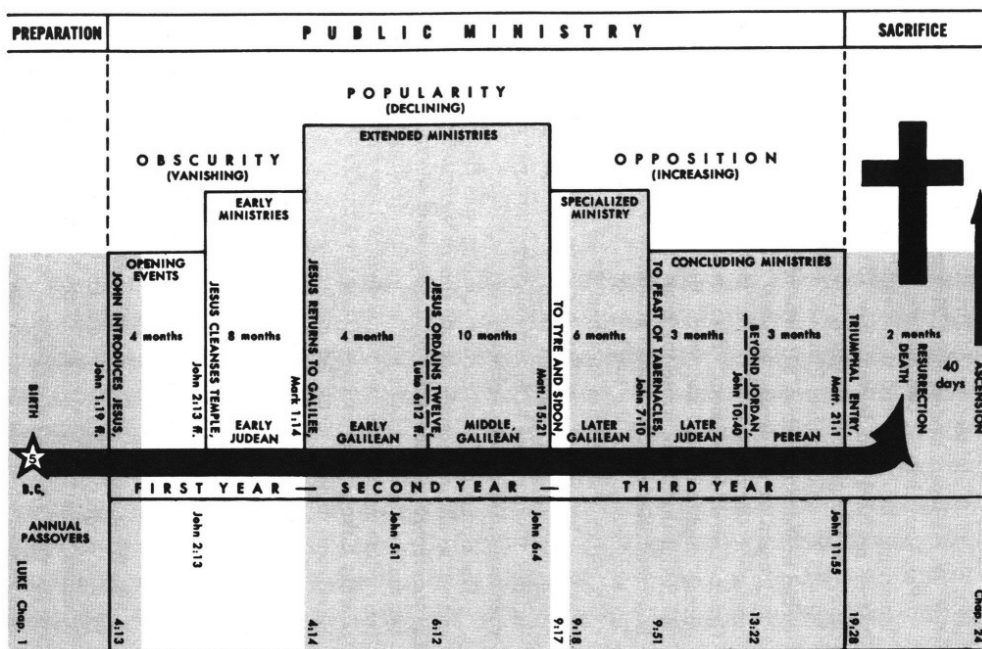
[Luke 3:38](#)



1 ELIZABETH—MARY	MAINLY PECULIAR TO LUKE										ABOUT 60% PECULIAR TO LUKE																							
	PREPARATION										INSTRUCTION										SACRIFICE													
	GALILEE										LATER JUDEAN AND PEREAN MINISTRIES TO JERUSALEM										AT JERUSALEM													
	MIRACLES AROUND HERE										PARABLES AROUND HERE										THE GREAT & GRAND SACRIFICE													
	"MIGHTY IN DEED" →										AND WORD" (24:19)										LAST MESSAGES		MISSION ACCOMPLISHED											
30 YEARS										1 1/2 YEARS										6 MONTHS										8 DAYS				50 DAYS

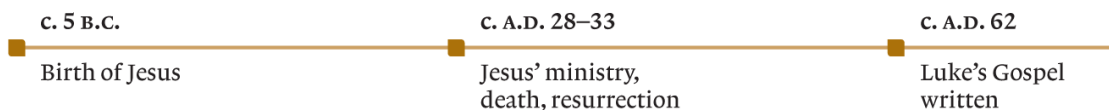
KEY PHRASE: "SON OF MAN"      KEY VERSES: 19:10; 24:19

From [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) by permission  
[John MacArthur's Introduction to the Gospel of Luke](#)  
[Charles Swindoll's Introduction to Luke](#)  
[Luke Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll



Click chart to enlarge LIFE OF CHRIST IN GOSPEL OF LUKE (See Shaded Areas)  
 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

Ryrie Study Bible -Borrow



Source: [ESV Global Study Bible](#)

### Presentation of the Son of Man, Lk 3:1-4:13

1. Preparation by the forerunner, Lk 3:1-20
  1. Beginning of John's ministry, Lk 3:1-6
  2. Preaching of John, Lk 3:7-14
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  4. Summary of the story of John, Lk 3:18-20
2. Identification at the baptism, Lk 3:21-22
3. Genealogy of the Son of man, Lk 3:23-38

4. Victory over the tempter, Lk 4:1-13  
(from Hiebert - An Introduction to the New Testament)

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## John Hannah's Bible Outline

### The preparation of the Son of Man (Luke 3:1-4:13)

- A. **The forerunner of the Son of Man** (Luke 3:1-20)
  - 1. The time of John's ministry (Luke 3:1-2)
  - 2. The content of John's ministry (Luke 3:3-17)
    - a. The emergence of John (Luke 3:3-6)
    - b. The message of John (Luke 3:7-17)
      - 1. Concerning wrath (Luke 3:7-14)
      - 2. Concerning Christ (Luke 3:15-17)
  - 3. The rejection of John (Luke 3:18-20)
- B. **The baptism of the Son of Man** (Luke 3:21-22)
  - 1. The submission of the Son (Luke 3:21)
  - 2. The anointing of the Spirit and authentication of the Father (Luke 3:22)
- C. **The genealogy of the Son of Man** (Luke 3:23-38)

**Luke 3:1 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 Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,**

- **Tiberius Caesar:** Lu 2:1
- **Pontius Pilate:** Lu 23:1-4,24 Ge 49:10 Ac 4:27 23:26 24:27 26:30
- **Herod:** Lu 3:19 9:7 23:6-11
- **his:** Mt 14:3 Mk 6:17
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:1 Setting the Stage for Jesus, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:1 Setting the Stage for Jesus, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Herod's Kingdom - click to enlarge  
From Holman Bible Atlas (available for purchase in [digital](#) or [Hardcover](#))  
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**Henry Burton** eloquently introduces Luke 3 with these comments - WHEN the Old Testament closed, prophecy had thrown upon the screen of the future the shadows of two persons, cast in heavenly light. Sketched in outline rather than in detail, still their personalities were sufficiently distinct to attract the gaze and hopes of the intervening centuries; while their differing, though related missions were clearly recognized. One was the Coming ONE, who should bring the "consolation" of Israel (Luke 2:25+), and who should Himself be that Consolation; and gathering into one august title all such glittering epithets as Star (Nu 24:17+), Shiloh (Ge 49:10+), and [Emmanuel-Immanuel](#) (Isaiah 7:14+), prophecy reverently saluted Him as "the Lord," paying Him prospective homage and adoration. The other was to be the herald of another Dispensation, proclaiming the new King, running before the royal chariot, even as Elijah ran from Ahab to the ivory palace at Jezreel, his Voice then dying away in silence, as he himself passes out of sight behind the throne. Such were the two figures that prophecy, in a series of dissolving views, had thrown forward from the Old into the New Testament; and such was the signal honor accorded to the Baptist, that while many of the Old Testament characters appear as reflections in the New, **his is the only human shadow thrown back from the New into the Old** ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Darrell Bock** gives helpful background for Luke 3 noting that "Luke 3:1–20 contains much uniquely Lucan material. Only Luke details the content of John the Baptist's teaching (Luke 3:10–14). Only Luke cites Isa. 40:4–5 (Luke 3:4–6). The lengthened citation (Matthew and Mark cite only Isa. 40:3) means that Jesus' coming offers the opportunity of salvation for all. Only Luke mentions the imprisonment of John so early in the account (Luke 3:19–20). But there are also traditional materials that have clear parallels elsewhere. The warning about judgment to the Jewish leaders has a clear parallel (Luke 3:7–9; Matt. 3:7–10). The promise of the Mightier One to come has conceptual parallels (Luke 3:15–17; Matt. 3:11–12; Mark 1:7–8). Both old and fresh material describe John's ministry of preparation....This pericope (Lk 3:1-6) has a twofold purpose: to place Jesus' ministry in the midst of world history (Lk 3:1–2a) and to set the ministry of John the Baptist in the midst of OT hope (Lk 3:4–6). The word of God comes to John in the

wilderness as his ministry renews God's direct activity for people (Lk 3:2b–3). By beginning in the wilderness, the account picks up where the infancy section left off with John (Lk 1:80). (See [Luke Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

For background let's review Luke's mention of the Roman ruler in chapter 2

**Luke 2:1+ Now in those days a decree went out from [Caesar Augustus](#), that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.**

Roman Empire-Caesar Augustus  
Click to enlarge

**COMMENT:** [Caesar Augustus](#) (Caius Octavius, grand-nephew, adopted son, and primary heir to Julius Caesar who died in 44 BC) was the founder of the Roman [Principate](#) and considered the first [Roman emperor](#). Before and after Julius' death in 44 B.C., the Roman government was constantly torn by power struggles. Octavius ([Caesar Augustus](#)) ascended to undisputed supremacy in 31 B.C. by defeating his last remaining rival, Antony, in a military battle at Actium. In 29 B.C., the Roman senate declared Octavius ([Caesar Augustus](#)) Rome's first emperor. Two years later (27 B C) they honored him with the title "**Augustus**" ("exalted one"—a term signifying religious veneration). Rome's republican government was effectively abolished, and Augustus ([Caesar Augustus](#)) was given supreme military power. [Caesar Augustus](#) reigned over the [Roman Empire](#) from 27 BC until his death at age 76 in AD 14. He was succeeded by [Tiberius Caesar](#) who his adopted son (Lk 2:1) and he reigned from A.D. 14-37.

Under the rule of [Caesar Augustus](#), the Roman Empire dominated the Mediterranean region, ushering in a period of great prosperity and relative peace (the [Pax Romana](#)). [Caesar Augustus](#) ordered a census of "all the inhabited earth" (Lk 2:1+), that is the world of the Roman Empire. This census decree actually established a cycle of enrollments that were to occur every 14 years. Palestine had previously been excluded from the Roman census, because Jews were exempt from serving in the Roman army, and the census was designed primarily to register young men for military service (as well as account for all Roman citizens). This new, universal census was ostensibly to number each nation by family and tribe (hence Joseph, a Judean, had to return to his ancestral home to register—see Lk 2:3+). Property and income values were not recorded in this registration, but later the statistics gathered in this census were used for levying [poll taxes](#) (Mt 22:17 - the annual fee of one [denarius](#) per person). The Jews came to regard the census itself as a distasteful symbol of Roman oppression because the funds were used to finance the occupying armies. However the poll tax was the most hated of all because it suggested that Rome owned even the people, while they viewed themselves and their nation as possessions of God. Another reason the Jews may have hated this tax was because of what the coin itself symbolized to the Romans. On one side of the silver denarius was a profile of [Tiberius Caesar](#), with the Latin inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" around the coin's perimeter. On the opposite side was a picture of the Roman goddess of peace, Pax, with the Latin inscription "High Priest."

**Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - [Tiberius Caesar](#)** (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus) was a [Roman Emperor](#) from 14 AD to 37 AD. **ESV Study** note points out that "Luke's precision in naming five Roman officials with their specific titles shows concern for detailed historical accuracy, and his accuracy is confirmed by historical records outside of the Bible." Luke's specific description is in contrast to Matthew's vague description "now in those days" (Mt 3:1+).

**John MacArthur** explains why the specific year signified by **the fifteenth year** is difficult to pin down with absolute certainty - Because of the way [Tiberius Caesar](#) came to power, this date is hard to fix precisely. When the Roman Senate declared Augustus emperor (see Lk 2:1), they did so on condition that his power would end with his death, rather than passing to his heirs. The idea was that the senate, rather than the emperor himself, was to choose the heir to the throne. However, Augustus circumvented that difficulty by appointing a co-regent, on whom he planned gradually to confer the imperial powers. When he outlived his first choice for successor, Augustus next selected his son-in-law, Tiberius, whom he adopted and made his heir in A.D. 4 (Augustus disliked Tiberius but hoped to pass power to his grandsons through him). Tiberius was made co-regent in A.D. 11, then automatically became sole ruler at the death of Augustus on Aug. 19, A.D. 14. If Luke's chronology is dated from Tiberius' appointment to the co-regency, the 15th year would be A.D. 25 or 26. If Luke was reckoning from the death of Augustus, this date would fall between Aug. 19, A.D. 28 and Aug. 18, A.D. 29. One other fact complicates the setting of a precise date: the Jews reckoned a ruler's term from the Jewish New Year following accession, so if Luke was using the Jewish system, the actual dates could be slightly later. The earlier date of A.D. 25–26 seems to fit the chronology of Christ's life best. (See [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Criswell** - "**Fifteenth year**" is interpreted in three different ways: **(1)** from the date of the emperor's accession, which for Tiberius

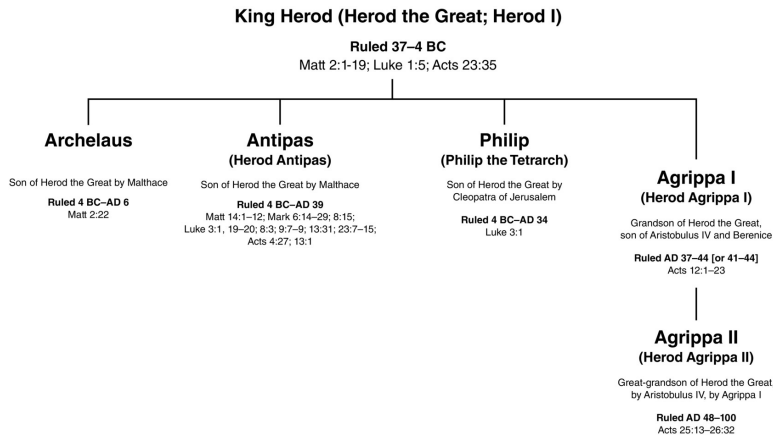
would run from August 19, A.D. 28, to August 18, A.D. 29; (2) from Tiberius' being made co-emperor with Augustus in A.D. 11, which would make it A.D. 25-26; or (3) by the Jewish system, which had two New Years: the sacred on 1 Nisan and the civil six months later, on 1 Tishri. Reigns were calculated from the New Year preceding accession, which would make the fifteenth year begin on 1 Tishri, A.D. 27. Thus, the reckoning refers to a time between A.D. 27 and 29. These initial verses provided precise chronological reckoning worthy of the most eminent historians. (ED: SOME WRITERS FAVOR 26AD and others 29AD - THE IMPORTANT POINT IS THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF JESUS CHRIST BEGINNING HIS MINISTRY - Lk 3:23 - ABOUT 30 YEARS OF AGE). ([The Believer's Study Bible](#))

Caesarea Inscription of Pilate  
on "Pilate Stone"

**When Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea - Governor** could be used to describe a [procurator](#) or [prefect](#), of which Pilate was the latter, as a famous inscription discovered at Caesarea in 1961 reveals. We encounter Pilate again in Lk 13:1; 23:1–56. Pilate ruled Judea from A.D. 26–36. And so we see Luke begins with the highest ruler, the emperor of Rome and progress to the highest ranking local Roman authority, Pontius Pilate who had been appointed the fifth governor or [prefect](#) of [Judaea](#) in AD 26. The rule of Pontius Pilate is described by the Jewish historian Josephus (see [Josephus - Antiquities of the Jews - Book XVIII - Chapter III and Chapter IV](#)). **Pontius Pilate** ([SEE PICTURE OF JESUS BEFORE PILATE AND THE JEWS](#)) (*Pontius Pilātus*, Greek: Πόντιος Πιλάτος, *Pontios Pilatos*) was the fifth [prefect](#) of the Roman province of [Judaea](#) from [AD](#) 26–36. He served under Emperor [Tiberius](#), and is best known today for the [trial](#) and [crucifixion of Jesus](#).

#### Related Resources:

- [Holman Bible Dictionary article on Pontius Pilate](#)
- **Wikipedia excerpt on Pontius Pilate** - The sources for Pilate's life are an inscription known as the [Pilate Stone](#) ([SEE PICTURE OF THIS GREAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY IN 1961 MUSEUM PICTURE](#)), which confirms his historicity and establishes his title as *prefect*; a brief mention by [Tacitus](#); [Philo of Alexandria](#); [Josephus](#); the four [canonical gospels](#); the [Acts of the Apostles](#); the [First Epistle to Timothy](#); the Gospel of Nicodemus; the Gospel of Marcion; and other apocryphal works. Based on these sources, it appears that Pilate was an [equestrian](#) of the Pontii family, and succeeded [Valerius Gratus](#) as prefect of Judaea in AD 26. Once in his post he offended the religious sensibilities of his subjects, leading to harsh criticism from [Philo](#), and many decades later, [Josephus](#). According to Josephus circa AD 93, Pilate was deposed and sent to Rome by [Lucius Vitellius](#) after harshly suppressing a [Samaritan](#) uprising, arriving just after the death of Tiberius which occurred on 16 March in AD 37. Pilate was replaced by [Marcellus](#).
- **John MacArthur's note Pontius Pilate** - As governor, Pilate displayed insensitivity and brutality (cf. Luke 13:1). Reversing the policy of the earlier governors, Pilate marched his troops into Jerusalem carrying standards bearing images that the Jews viewed as idolatrous. Outraged, many protested heatedly against what they saw as a sacrilege. Pilate ignored their protests and ordered them, on pain of death, to stop bothering him. But they called his bluff and dared him to carry out his threat. Unwilling to massacre so many people, Pilate removed the offending standards. The story reveals his poor judgment, stubbornness, arrogance, and vacillating weakness. Pilate also enraged the Jews when he took money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct to bring water to Jerusalem. In the ensuing riots, his soldiers beat and slaughtered many of the protesters. Ironically, the incident that finally triggered Pilate's removal from office involved not the Jews, but their hated rivals the Samaritans. A group of them decided to climb Mount Gerizim in search of golden objects Moses had supposedly hidden on its summit. Mistakenly thinking the Samaritans were insurrectionists, Pilate ordered his troops to attack them, and many were killed. The Samaritans complained about Pilate's brutality to his immediate superior, the governor of Syria. He removed Pilate from office and ordered him to Rome to be judged by Tiberius, but Tiberius died before Pilate reached Rome. At that point, Pilate disappeared from history. Some accounts claim that he was banished, others that he was executed, still others that he committed suicide. (See context in [Luke Commentary](#))



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 (Source: Lorgos.com)



Painting of Herod Antipas

And Herod was tetrarch ([tetraarcho](#)) of Galilee - Herod the tetrarch of Galilee (Mt 14:1, Lk 3:19, 9:7, Acts 13:1, aka '[Herod Antipas](#),' "King Herod" - Mk 6:14 but not officially a king) - [Map of Herod's Kingdom](#) - Herod Antipas, son of [Herod the Great](#). Herod Antipas was step-brother of Philip the tetrarch, who was also a son of Herod the Great. He ruled from 4 B.C.–A.D. 39, sharing the rule of his father's realm with his two brothers. One brother, [Archelaus](#) (Mt 2:22 "But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,") was banished in A.D. 6 and died in A.D. 18; the other brother, [Herod Philip](#) died in A.D. 34.

**Herod the tetrarch of Galilee** is the Herod referred to in the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' ministry. It was this Herod (Antipas) who imprisoned John the Baptist (Luke 3:20) and later had him executed (Luke 9:9). Herod Antipas also had a hand in the unjust trial of Jesus

And when he (Pilate) learned that He (Jesus) belonged to **Herod's** jurisdiction, he sent Him to **Herod**, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. 8 Now **Herod** was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And **Herod** with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 Now **Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day**; for before they had been enemies with each other. (Luke 23:7-12+).

**Wikipedia - Herod Antipater** ([Greek](#): ῥοδῆς νῆπιπᾶτρος, *Hērōdēs Antipatros*; born before 20 BC – died after 39 AD), known by the nickname **Antipas**, was a 1st-century ruler of [Galilee](#) and [Perea](#) (from 4 BC to AD 39), who bore the title of tetrarch ("ruler of a quarter") and is referred to as both "Herod the Tetrarch" and "King Herod" (Mark 6:14) in the New Testament although he never held the title of king. He is best known today for accounts in the New Testament of his role in events that led to the executions of [John the Baptist](#) and [Jesus of Nazareth](#).

#### Resources on Herod Antipas -

- American Tract Society [Antipas](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Antipas Herod Antipas](#)

- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Antipas](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Antipas](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Antipas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Antipas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Antipas](#) [Antipas \(2\)](#) [Antipas](#)
- [Who were the Herodians?](#)
- [Who are the various Herods mentioned in the Bible?](#)

And his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis ([orange region on map](#)), and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene - Philip is also known as [Herod Philip II](#) and is [Herod's](#) brother - for regions over which he ruled see notes below.

**Ituraea** - Place name meaning, "related to Jetur." Region over which Herod Philip was governor when John the Baptist began his public ministry (Luke 3:1). It was located northeast of Galilee between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains, though its precise boundaries are almost impossible to determine. Racially, the Ituraeans were of Ishmaelite stock; their origin probably should be traced to Jetur the son of Ishmael (Genesis 25:15). The earliest extant reference to the Ituraeans as a people dates from the second century B.C. Pompey conquered the territory for Rome about 50 B.C. Ituraea was eventually absorbed into other political districts, losing its distinct identity by the end of the first century A.D. See Herods; Geography. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**Zodhiates'** note on **Ituraea** - Iturea (Luke 3:1), indicating the region northeast of Palestine, beyond the Jordan. The Itureans were descended from Ishmael (Gen. 25:15), who had a son named Jetur from whom the name Iturea is derived. The Itureans were seminomadic people. Until the fourth century A.D., there was no defined territory called Iturea; only the ethnic name Iturean was used.

**Trachonitis** - Place name meaning "heap of stones." ("rugged," "rough") A political and geographic district in northern Palestine on the east side of the Jordan River ([orange region on map](#)) (Luke 3:1). Its terrain was rugged and best suited to raising sheep and goats. The area was almost totally devoid of timber. During John the Baptist's ministry Trachonitis was ruled by [Philip](#), the brother of [Herod Antipas](#). Known as [Bashan](#) in the Old Testament (Amos 4:1), it was just south of Damascus. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#)) [Zodhiates](#) has this note on **Trachonitis** - One of the five Roman provinces into which the district northeast of the Jordan was divided in NT times. It lay to the east of Ituraea and Gaulonitis and to the south of Damascus. The Emperor Augustus entrusted it to Herod the Great on the condition that he should clear it of robbers. Herod Philip succeeded to the tetrarchy (Luke 3:1). He died in A.D. 33, and the emperor Caligula bestowed the province of Trachonitis upon Herod Agrippa I. Later it was part of the dominions of Herod Agrippa II, A.D. 53.

**Lysanias** - This is the only NT mention and there is not much known about this man in historical records. He is mentioned in Luke 3:1 as tetrarch of Abilene in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, and thus fixing the date of the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness at about 26 or 28 AD. A L ysanias is mentioned by Josephus as having ruled over Chalcis and Abilene, and as having been slain by Mark Antony at the instigation of Cleopatra. As this happened about 36 BC, Luke has been charged with inaccuracy. Inscriptions, however, corroborate the view that the Lysanias of Luke was probably a descendant of the Lysanias mentioned by Josephus (compare Schurer, *HJ the Priestly Code (P)*, div I, volume II, App. 1, p. 338). ([SBE](#))

**Abilene** - Small mountainous region ruled by the tetrarch Lysanias at the time John the Baptist began his public ministry (Luke 3:7). Abilene is mentioned in Luke 3:1 as the district of which Lysanias was tetrarch in the 15th year of Tiberius. It was called after its capital Abila, situated on the Barada, about 18 miles from Damascus, and represented by the modern village of *Suk*. The identity of *Suk* with Abila is confirmed by a Roman rock-inscription to the west of the town. According to popular tradition, the name Abila is derived from Abel, who was buried by Cain in a tomb which is still pointed out in the neighbourhood. Little is known of the history of Abilene at the time referred to by St. Luke; but when Tiberius died in a.d. 37, some ten years later, the tetrarchy of Lysanias was bestowed by Caligula on [Herod Agrippa I](#). (Josephus *Ant.* xviii. vi. 10), and this grant was confirmed in a.d. 41 by Claudius (xix. v. 1; *BJ* ii. xi. 5). On the death of [Herod Agrippa I](#). (a.d. 44) his dominions passed into the charge of Roman procurators (*Ant.* xix. ix. 2; *BJ* ii. xi. 6), but in a.d. 53 some parts of them, including Abilene, were granted by Claudius to [Herod Agrippa II](#). (*Ant.* xx. vii. 1; *BJ* ii. xii. 8), and remained in his possession till his death in a.d. 100. ([See Hastings Dictionary](#))

or province. Later tetrarch became a common title among the Romans for those who governed any part of a province or kingdom subject only to the Roman Emperor. A tetrarch was a sovereign ruler over a specific domain with not as much dominion, rank or authority as a king and they ruled only with the approval of the Roman authorities. A tetrarch was roughly equivalent to being governor of a region. Several times in the NT, Herod tetrarch of Galilee is called a king (Mt 14:9, Mk 6:14-29), reflecting popular usage. [Herod the Great](#) and his brother Phasael were at one time made tetrarchs of Judea by Antony. The former also at his death left half his kingdom to Archelaus with the title of ethnarch, ruler of the nation. He divided the rest between two of his other sons, Herod Antipas and Philip, with the title of tetrarchs (Josephus Ant. 18.5.1.). Thus Lysanias is said to be tetrarch of Abilene (Luke 3:1). In the NT, spoken only of Herod Antipas (Mt. 14:1; Lk 3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1). Herod the tetrarch (Herod Antipas) is also called also basileús (935), king (Mt. 14:9; Mark 6:14).

**Tetrarch** - Properly governor of the fourth part of a larger province and kingdom, i.e. [atetrarchy](#). The title "king" is applied by courtesy, not right, to Herod "the tetrarch" (Luke 3:1; Mark 6:14). (See HEROD.) As Archelaus was "ethnarch" over half of Herod the Great's whole kingdom, so Philip and Antipus had divided between them the remaining half, and were each "tetrarch" over the fourth; Herod over Galilee; Philip over Ituraea and Trachonitis; Lysanias over Abilene. Caligula annexed the three tetrarchies to the kingdom of Herod Agrippa I, whom he honoured with the title "king" (Acts 12).

Here is another summary of this somewhat confusing list of rulers -- Upon [Herod the Great's](#) death the Romans divided his kingdom among three of his sons and his sister—[Archelaus](#) became [ethnarch](#) of the [tetrarchy of Judea](#), [Herod Antipas](#) became tetrarch of [Galilee](#) and [Peraea](#), [Philip](#) became tetrarch of territories north and east of the Jordan, and [Salome I](#) was given a [toparchy](#) including the cities of Jabneh, Ashdod, and Phasaelis.

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#### QUESTION- [Who was Pontius Pilate?](#)

**ANSWER** - Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 26-36, serving under Emperor Tiberius. He is most known for his involvement in condemning Jesus to death on a cross.

Outside of the four Gospels, Pontius Pilate is mentioned by [Tacitus](#), Philo, and Josephus. In addition, the "Pilate Stone," discovered in 1961 and dated c. A.D. 30, includes a description of Pontius Pilate and mentions him as "prefect" of Judea. Pilate is also mentioned in the apocryphal writings, but these were all written at much later dates.

In the Bible, Pontius Pilate is mentioned solely in connection with the trials and crucifixion of Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) portray Pilate as reluctant to crucify Jesus. Pilate calls the charges against Jesus "baseless" (Luke 23:14) and several times declares Jesus to be not guilty: "What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty" (Luke 23:22).

Pilate's conscience was already bothering him when his wife sent him an urgent message concerning Jesus. The note begged him, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19).

John's Gospel offers some more detail of the trial, including an additional conversation between Pilate and Jesus. Jesus acknowledges Himself as a king and claims to speak directly for the truth. Pilate responds with the famous question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). The question intentionally communicated multiple meanings. Here was a situation in which truth was compromised in order to condemn an innocent man. Pilate, who is supposedly seeking the truth, asks the question of the One who is Himself "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). A human judge, confused about the truth, was about to condemn the Righteous Judge of the world.

In the end, Pilate sought a compromise. Knowing Jesus had been handed over by the religious leaders out of envy, he appealed to the crowds at the Passover, asking which "criminal" should be set free, Jesus or Barabbas? The leaders convinced the crowd to cry out for Barabbas (Matthew 27:20–21). Giving in to political pressure, Pilate authorized both the flogging and crucifixion of Jesus: "Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:15).

Pilate had the charge against Jesus posted on the cross above Jesus' head: "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS" ([Matthew 27:37](#)). As soon as Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus in order to bury Him, and Pilate granted the request ([John 19:38](#)). The last glimpse we have of Pontius Pilate is when he assigns guards for Jesus' tomb ([Matthew 27:64-66](#)).

Pontius Pilate's brief appearance in Scripture is full of tragedy. He ignored his conscience, he disregarded the good advice of his wife, he chose political expediency over public rectitude, and he failed to recognize the truth even when Truth was standing right in



front of him. When given an opportunity to evaluate the claims of Jesus, what will we decide? Will we accept His claim to be the King, or will we follow the voice of the crowd?

[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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### J C Ryle comments on the list of evil men mentioned in Luke's introduction -

Let us notice first, in this passage, **the wickedness of the times when Christ's Gospel was brought into the world.** The opening verses of the chapter tell us the names of some who were rulers and governors in the earth, when the ministry of John the Baptist began. It is a melancholy list, and full of instruction. There is hardly a name in it which is not infamous for wickedness. Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and his brother, and Annas, and Caiaphas, were men of whom we know little or nothing but evil. The earth seemed given into the hands of the wicked. (Job 9:24.) When such were the rulers, what must the people have been? Such was the state of things when Christ's forerunner was commissioned to begin preaching. Such were the times when the first foundation of Christ's church was brought out and laid. We may truly say, that God's ways are not our ways.

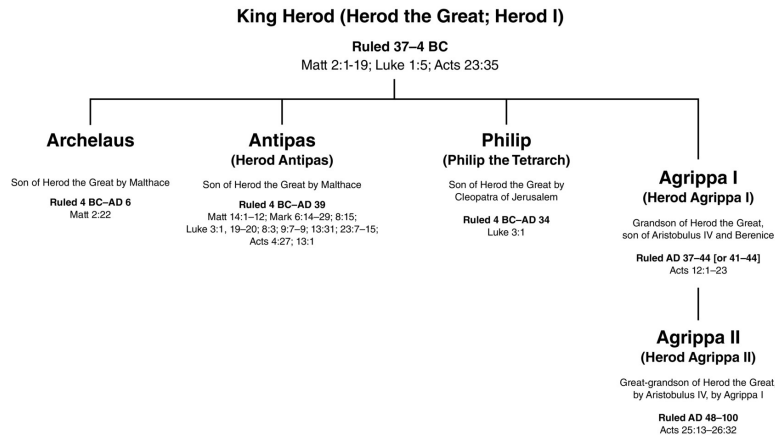
Let us learn ***never to despair about the cause of God's truth, however black and unfavorable its prospects may appear.*** At the very time when things seem hopeless, God may be preparing a mighty deliverance. At the very season when Satan's kingdom seems to be triumphing, the "little stone, cut without hands," may be on the point of crushing it to pieces. The darkest hour of the night is often that which just precedes the day.

**Let us beware of slacking our hands from any work of God, because of the wickedness of the times, or the number and power of our adversaries.** "He that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap." (Eccl. 11:4.) Let us work on, and believe that help will come from heaven, when it is most needed. In the very hour when a Roman emperor, and ignorant priests, seemed to have everything at their feet, the Lamb of God was about to come forth from Nazareth, and set up the beginnings of His kingdom. What He has done once, He can do again. In a moment He can turn His church's midnight into the blaze of noon day. ([Luke 3 Commentary](#))

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**Mark E Moore** has a helpful note writing that "Luke doesn't write *"Once upon a time."* He nails this narrative into history with specific leaders (Lk 3:1-2). And this time he really outdoes himself. He lists no less than seven rulers in this "chronological drumroll":

1. **Tiberius Caesar** — His predecessor, Augustus, died on August 19, a.d. 14. If Tiberius immediately took power, this would place this narrative in a.d. 29 according to the normal Roman method of reckoning.
  2. **Herod** — Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. He ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 b.c. to a.d. 39 (cf. Lk 3:19-20; 13:31; 23:7).
  3. **Philip** — Like Herod Antipas, he was a son of Herod the Great. He ruled Iturea and Traconitis, northeast of Palestine from 4 b.c. to a.d. 33/34. A Tetrarch was one who ruled over part of Palestine which was then divided into four parts.
  4. **Lysanias** — no significant historical reference.
  5. **Pilate** — This is Pontius Pilate who ruled as governor from a.d. 26-36.
  6. **Annas** — He held the office of high priest from a.d. 7-15. It appears that Annas, according to the Jewish law, was high priest for life (cf. Jn 11:49; 18:13; Acts 4:6). He was still powerful and diplomatic enough to have five of his sons (Josephus, Ant. 20.9.1) and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, installed after him. He was the virtual ruler even when his children held the actual title.
  7. **Caiaphas** — He was the officially designated high priest by the Roman government (a.d. 18-36). He was the fourth to be appointed after Annas. The people, however, would still look to Annas for leadership. (See [The Chronological Life of Christ](#) page 67)
-



Click to Enlarge  
 (Source: Lorgos.com)

### Summary of the Herodian family in NT history:

In addition to the father, [Herod the Great](#), and his son and successor, [Archelaus](#) (see green regions in this map)(Mt 2:1), three other sons are named in the N.T. One daughter is not named in Scripture (Salome I). Note that Archelaus proved to be such an inept and brutal ruler that he was deposed in A.D. 6 and his territory (Judea, Samaria, and Idumea) was placed under the rule of Roman governors (Pilate was the fifth of those governors).

- (1) [Herod Antipas](#) (Mk 6:14ff, Mt 14:1, Lu 3:1), tetrarch of [Galilee](#) and [Perea](#) (see purple regions in this map) (4 B.C. until banished, A.D. 39).
- (2) [Herod Philip \(Boethos\)](#), (mentioned Mk 6:14 as Philip Mk 6:17, Mt 14:3, Lu 3:19). (Note that this is NOT the same Philip mentioned in Luke 3:1)
- (3) Another [Herod Philip II](#) (mentioned only in Lu 3:1), tetrarch of territory east of Jordan (see orange regions in this map)(4 B.C.–A.D. 33).
- (4) Herod the Great's daughter Salome I ([ruled over the small territory in grey](#))

Two children of another son of [Herod the Great](#), [Aristobulus](#) (a son not included in the N.T.), are also named:

- (1). [Herodias](#) (mentioned Mk 6:17ff, Mt 14:3)
- (2). [Herod Agrippa I](#) (Acts 12:1,6,18-24).

Others of the Herodian family named in the N.T. are three children of Herod Agrippa I:

- (1) [Herod Agrippa II](#) (Acts 25:13ff Acts 26:1,2,27-32)
- (2) [Drusilla](#) ([picture of Paul before Drusilla and Felix](#)) (Acts 24:24)
- (3) [Bernice](#) (Acts 25:13, 26:30).

Thus it will be observed that two or more names of each of three successive generations after Herod the Great are mentioned in the N.T.

### Related Resource:

- **Herodian Dynasty** in the [Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels \(borrow a copy - go to page 317 for 8 page article\)](#) Introduction -The Herodian family ruled over the Palestinian area from 40 B.C. until around A.D. 100. In order to understand the political and social setting of Jesus' ministry, it is important to understand the story of the Herods up through the first four decades of the first century A.D.
  1. Herod the Great (47–4 B.C.)
  2. Archelaus (4 B.C.–A.D. 6)
  3. Philip the Tetrarch (4 B.C.–A.D. 34)
  4. Herod Antipas (4 B.C.–A.D. 39)
  5. The Herodians

## Luke 3:2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness

- **Annas:** Joh 11:49-51 18:13,14,24 Ac 4:6
- **The word:** Lu 1:59-63 Jer 1:2 2:1 Eze 1:3 Ho 1:1,2 Jon 1:1 Mic 1:1 Zep 1:1
- **In:** Lu 1:80 Isa 40:3 Mt 3:1 11:7 Mk 1:3 Joh 1:23
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:2-3 Setting the Stage for Jesus. Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### A WORD FROM GOD IN DAYS OF RITUALISTIC RELIGION

Luke 3:1-2 specifically tells us when John came, Lk 3:3 describes how he came and Lk 3:4-20 explains why John came.

In the high priesthood of Annas ([hannas](#)) and Caiaphas ([Kaiaphas](#)) (See [gotquestions](#) on [Annas](#) and [Caiaphas](#)). While Caiaphas (18-36 AD) was the ruling high priest at the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, his predecessor Annas (6-16 AD) still exerted considerable influence as we see from passages like John 18:13; Acts 4:6. **NET Note** says that "Use of the singular **high priesthood** to mention two figures is unusual but accurate, since Annas was the key priest from A.D. 6–15 and then his relatives were chosen for many of the next several years. After two brief tenures by others, his son-in-law Caiaphas came to power and stayed there until A.D. 36."

**The Word ([rhema](#)) of God came to John the son of Zacharias** - [Click here for detailed summary](#) of John. This description of the inception of John's ministry is unique to Luke's Gospel and only Luke tells us his father's name was [Zacharias](#) (cf Lk 1:5, 8-20+) which is given to differentiate him from other Jews who were named **John**.

Luke's description is similar to the call of OT prophets, including men like **Jeremiah** ("to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah." - Jer 1:2), **Hosea** ("The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri," Hos 1:1), **Ezekiel** ("the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest son of Buzi," = Ezek 1:3), **Joel** (The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel = Joel 1:1); **Jonah** ("The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai" = Jonah 1:1), Micah ("The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth" = Mic 1:1) **Zephaniah** ("The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi" = Zeph 1:1) and **Haggai** ("In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai" = Hag 1:1). Notice the repeated "formula" the Word of God to the prophet whose father is then identified.

**THOUGHT** - The word of God came to John - This is what the world needs! This is what America needs! This is what we all need daily! A Word from God to counter our natural tendency toward self-centeredness and self-gratification.

And so John was a God called man, a man filled with the Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15+, Luke 1:44+), who was now being prepared to fulfill the purpose for which he had been miraculously born, to be "the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS." (Luke 1:76+). And without doubt John was still filled with the Spirit when this word came from God. Why do I say that? We know from the book of Acts that filling with the Spirit was intimately linked with bold speech, certain the pattern we see in John's ministry! John was a simple man, and yet he took God at His word. Because of his obedience the Lord said of him, "Among [those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet](#) than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28+).

Notice also that the phrase **the Word ([rhema](#)) of God came to John** literally reads **the word of God came upon John!** **G. Campbell Morgan** observes, "The force of the preposition (**upon**, Greek *epi*) is that of pressure from above. **The word of the Lord came UPON** him, pressed down UPON him from above! Here is the qualification for preaching. The message of God comes **UPON** a man."

#### Related Resource:

- 8 part discussion on John the Baptist in [Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels \(borrow a copy - go to page 383 for article\)](#)

**Steven Cole** agrees "with **G Campbell Morgan** and other commentators that a man needs a special call from God to preach His Word. It need not be mystical or miraculous, but he needs a strong inner sense that God has called him to the work. Otherwise, when tough times of discouragement or opposition come, as they surely will if a man preaches the truth, he will not stay in the battle. A man who preaches God's Word must always remember that it is not his own word or ideas that he proclaims, but *God's* Word. Sometimes, as we will see in a moment, God's Word is not warm, fuzzy and popular. If a preacher becomes a man-pleaser, he

ceases to please God (Gal. 1:10+, cf Mt 6:24±). Instead of proclaiming God's Word, he becomes a politician trying to keep his popularity ratings high. During the Gulf War, a man wrote to his senator urging him to support the ejection of Iraq from Kuwait. He received two separate replies from the senator's office. The first letter agreed with him and stated the senator's strong support for President Bush's response to the crisis. The second letter, sent by mistake, thanked the man for opposing the war and pointed out that the senator had voted against the war resolution! That senator was like another politician who was asked where he stood on an issue. He said, "I have friends who are for it and friends who are against it, and I am with my friends." In bad times we desperately need an authoritative word from God, proclaimed by His faithful messenger. ([Sermon](#))

**THOUGHT** - So God spoke and John obediently responded. How many of us, when God speaks, counter with questions and with whys? O, to have a Spirit filled and enabled response like John, to hear and to heed when God speaks! In Jesus' Name. Amen

**Henry Morris on the Word (rhema) of God came to John** - This call to John the Baptist came about sixteen to eighteen years after the events associated with the previous verses (referring to the events in Luke 2 which ended with the boy Jesus "increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Lk 2:52+). Tiberius had succeeded Augustus as emperor (Luke 3:1) and continued in power through all the rest of the events described in the four gospels. To show that John's ministry was in fulfillment of prophecy, Luke quotes (in Luke 3:4-5+) more of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 40:3-4) than any of the other three writers, though all refer to it. John was obviously a preacher with great courage (Luke 3:7-14+), no matter who was present.

Regarding **the Word (rhema) of God came** remember that it has been many years without a Word from God, the last word being Malachi about 460 B. C. As **Steven Cole** says "It had been 400 years since there had been a prophet in Israel, calling the people to spiritual renewal and reform. Bad times abound, but times are especially bad when there is no word from the Lord. Those who knew God and waited for the consolation of Israel must have despaired at times. But they knew that what they needed was not better politicians. They needed a word from God. ([Good News for Bad Times](#))

**Henry Morris** has an interesting note on John commenting that "Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest man ever born up to His day (Matthew 11:11). Yet, for some strange reason, John is almost ignored by modern believers. In a very real sense, he was the first Christian, the first Christian witness, the first Christian preacher, the first Christian prophet, and, finally, the first Christian martyr. He was the first to baptize converts and could have even started the first local church since the disciples of Christ were already largely organized and ministering together under John before they were instructed to follow Christ (John 1:35-37; Acts 1:15-26).

John the Baptist's Ministry - click to enlarge  
From Holman Bible Atlas (available for purchase in [digital](#) or [Hardcover](#))  
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**In the wilderness** (desert) - Luke had earlier alluded to the **wilderness** in (Lk 1:80+) describing how John the Baptist "continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in **the deserts** ([eremos](#) = "wilderness") until the day of his public appearance to Israel." .So it is significant to observe where John was when God spoke. He was not the holy Temple in Jerusalem, but the hot desert in Judea. As shown on the map above, the **wilderness** (Mt 3:1+ = "**wilderness of Judea**"; cf Mk 1:4+) refers to the uninhabited desert region to the northwest of the Dead Sea. Luke's location in the wilderness indicates John was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of "A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD **in the wilderness**; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)" (See Lk 3:4, Mt 3:3+).

**MacArthur** adds that "John seems to have preached near the northern end of this region, close by where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea (Lk 3:6). This was a full day's journey from Jerusalem and seems an odd location to announce the arrival of a King. But it is perfectly in keeping with God's ways (1 Co 1:26–29)." (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Bock** notes that "Given the Gospel of John's comments, the ministry involved both sides of the Jordan River, since Perea was also included in the ministry (John 1:28; 3:23; 10:40)." (Ibid)

**Barry J. Beitzel on wilderness** - It is difficult to describe adequately the foreboding desolation and howling barrenness along the shores of the Dead Sea.... If there could be fixed in one's mind the image of the almost-painful sterility of the Sahara or of Death Valley, and then multiply that by a factor of four or more, one might come close to capturing the geographical reality to which he is exposed along the shores of the Dead Sea. (Borrow [The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands](#))

**THOUGHT** - Do you feel like you are in the **wilderness** beloved? Then take heart from this passage for God can still speak to you even though you feel like you are in a wilderness! Today of course He does not speak to us exactly as He did to John, but He still speaks to us through His Word of Truth and prayer. So when you are in the wilderness don't throw up your hands but "throw yourself" into His book and beseech Him to speak. He is ready and willing to speak to you through His Word and prayer. Make sure you first confess any known sins

in order to clear the "static" from the "Heavenly walkie talkie!"

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**Annas** (452)(**hannas**) son of Seth, was a priest at the time John the Baptist began his public preaching (Luke 3:2). **Annas** (derived from Hebrew **Chananyah** from **chanan** = show favor, be gracious) means merciful or gracious! He was appointed to the high priesthood about A.D. 6 by Quirinius, governor of Syria. Though he was deposed in A.D. 15 by Gratus, he continued to exercise considerable influence. When Jesus was arrested, He was taken for His first mock trial before **Annas** (John 18:13). After Pentecost, **Annas** led other priests in questioning Peter and the other church leaders (Acts 4:6+).

**Annas** is used 4x in the NT - Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13; Jn. 18:24; Acts 4:6.

**Caiaphas** (2533)(**Kaiaphas**) - His name means "rock" or "depression." The high priest at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (Matthew 26:3). He was the son-in-law of Annas and a leader in the plot to have Jesus arrested and executed. Little is known about Caiaphas beyond what can be learned from the New Testament. Evidently he was appointed high priest about A.D. 18 and removed from office about A.D. 36 or 37. He sat as high priest over the second illegal night trial of Jesus and then over the "trial" of Peter and John in Acts, this event marking the beginning of the persecution of the Body of Christ.

Caiaphas - 9x in the NT - Mt 26:3,57; Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49; 18:13-14,24,28; Acts 4:6.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Annas in the Bible?](#)
- [What is the account of Annas and Caiaphas?](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Caiaphas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Caiaphas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Caiaphas](#) [Caiaphas \(2\)](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)

**Word** (4487)(**rhema** from verb **rheo** = to speak - to say, speak or utter definite words) refers to the spoken word, especially a word as uttered by a living voice. **Laleo** is another word translated speak but it refers only to uttering a sound whereas **rheo** refers to uttering a definite intelligible word. **Rhema** refers to any sound produced by the voice which has a definite meaning. It focuses upon the content of the communication. In other words, the use of **rhema** rather than the more general term **logos** (as in Lk 5:1+) refers to a specific **utterance**, emphasizing more the act of speaking, the power of speaking, the act of expressing with one's voice.

Luke uses **rhema** more than any of the other synoptic Gospels - Lk. 1:37; Lk. 1:38; Lk. 1:65; Lk. 2:15; Lk. 2:17; Lk. 2:19; Lk. 2:29; Lk. 2:50; Lk. 2:51; Lk. 3:2; Lk. 5:5; Lk. 7:1; Lk. 9:45; Lk. 18:34; Lk. 20:26; Lk. 24:8; Lk. 24:11

The Phrase **word of God** surprisingly appears only 47x in 46v in the Bible - 1 Sam. 9:27; 2 Sam. 16:23; 1 Ki. 12:22; 1 Chr. 17:3; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 15:6; Mk. 7:13; Lk. 3:2; 5:1; 8:11,21; 11:28; Jn. 10:35; Acts 4:31; 6:2,7; 8:14; 11:1; 13:5,7,46; 17:13; 18:11; Rom. 9:6; 1 Co. 14:36; 2 Co. 2:17; 4:2; Eph. 6:17; Phil. 1:14; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:9; Tit. 2:5; Heb. 4:12; 6:5; 11:3; 13:7; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 3:5; 1 Jn. 2:14; Rev. 1:2,9; 6:9; 19:13; 20:4

**Wilderness** (desolate, desert)(2048)(**eremos**) when used as an adjective, normally describes places which are abandoned, desolate, or unpopulated. **Eremos** "is an adjectival form used primarily in the nominal sense of "wilderness," "desert" (Renn) The wilderness Luke describes extended from the hill country of Judah on the west to the Dead Sea on the east, and north into the Jordan River valley. In a way **eremos** in this context is a **double entendre** because John was himself in a literal **wilderness** crying and pointing out to the Jewish nation the way out of the spiritual **wilderness** and darkness which had enshrouded the nation of Israel for centuries.

Luke's uses of **eremos** - Lk. 1:80; Lk. 3:2; Lk. 3:4; Lk. 4:1; Lk. 4:42; Lk. 5:16; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 8:29; Lk. 9:12; Lk. 15:4; Acts 1:20; Acts 7:30; Acts 7:36; Acts 7:38; Acts 7:42; Acts 7:44; Acts 8:26; Acts 13:18; Acts 21:38;

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**J C Ryle applies the word of God coming to John** - There is something in this account which throws great light on the office of all ministers of the Gospel. It is an office which no man has a right to take up, unless he has an inward call from God, as well as an outward call from man. Visions and revelations from heaven, of course we have no right to expect. Fanatical claims to special gifts of the Spirit must always be checked and discouraged. But an inward call a man must have, before he puts his hand to the work of the ministry. The word of God must "come to him," as really and truly as it came to John the Baptist, before he undertakes to "come to the word." In short, he must be able to profess with a good conscience, that he is "inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit" to take upon

him the office of a minister. The man who cannot say this, when he comes forward to be ordained, is committing a great sin, and running without being sent.

Let it be a part of our daily prayers, that our churches may have no ministers excepting those who are really called of God. An unconverted minister is an injury and burden to a church. How can a man speak of truths which he has never tasted? How can he testify of a Savior whom he has never seen by faith, and never laid hold on for his own soul? The pastor after God's own heart, is a man to whom the Word of God has come. He runs confidently and speaks boldly, because he has been sent. ([Luke 3](#))

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**Luke 3:2 Make A Difference** - While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. —Luke 3:2

Seven men are mentioned in Luke 3, who had political, economic, and religious control over Israel: Roman Emperor Tiberias Caesar, Governor Pontius Pilate, the tetrarchs Herod, Philip, and Lysanias, along with high priests Annas and Caiaphas. While they were in power, "The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Lk 3:2-3).

What possible difference could it make for a person with no money and power to respond to God's word when it seemed that others were so firmly in control? How could the actions of one insignificant person change anything? The answer is revealed in John the Baptist's message of repentance, his announcement of the coming Messiah (Lk 3:16-17), and his bold confronting of Herod (Lk 3:19). John's role was to prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah, and the world was blessed by his obedience.

Today our task as Christians is to reflect the crucified and risen Savior in everything we do, and to tell others about Him. God calls each of us to live according to His instructions in the Bible. And our response will make all the difference in the world. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The laws of God are true and right;  
They stand as firm today  
As when He put them in His Word  
And told us to obey.  
—Fasick

**Obedience to God is the key to a lasting influence.**

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**Luke 3:2 Insignificant** - The Word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. —Luke 3:2

Read: Luke 3:2-6,15-18

"Movers and shakers" are people climbing the ladder of influence and success. Luke 3 mentions seven prominent leaders who exercised control in the society of their time. Roman Emperor Tiberias Caesar held the power of life and death over people in his far-flung empire. Pontius Pilate represented Rome as governor of Judea; while Herod, Philip, and Lysanias kept people in line at the regional level. Annas and Caiaphas served as high priests, taking their religious authority seriously.

While these power brokers flexed their political muscles, "the Word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (v.2). Who could seem less important than this obscure man living in the desert and listening for God's voice? What could John the Baptist possibly accomplish by "preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"? (v.3). Yet multitudes came to John seeking truth, turning from their wrongs, and wondering if he could be the Messiah (vv.7,15). John told them, "One mightier than I is coming . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (v.16).

John's life helps us understand what it means to be significant in God's eyes. Like John, may everything we say and do point others to Jesus. [By David C. McCasland \(Used by permission - Copyright Our Daily Bread\)](#)

Lord, help us to surrender our desire for influence  
and success to You. May our heart's desire ever be to be  
used by You to further Your kingdom.  
Make our lives a living testimony of You.

Our surrender to God precedes His significant work in our life.

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**Luke 3 - Son Reflector** -

This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light. —John 1:7

The cozy little village of Rjukan, Norway, is a delightful place to live—except during the dark days of winter. Located in a valley at the foot of the towering Gaustatoppen Mountain, the town receives no direct sunlight for nearly half of the year. Residents had long considered the idea of placing mirrors at the top of the mountain to reflect the sun. But the concept was not feasible until recently. In 2005, a local artist began “The Mirror Project” to bring together people who could turn the idea into reality. Eight years later, in October 2013, the mirrors went into action. Residents crowded into the town square to soak up the reflected sunlight.

In a spiritual sense, much of the world is like the village of Rjukan—mountains of troubles keep the light of Jesus from getting through. But God strategically places His children to act as reflectors. One such person was John the Baptist, who came “to bear witness of the Light”—Jesus—who gives light “to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death” (John 1:7; Luke 1:79).

Just as sunlight is essential for emotional and physical health, so exposure to the light of Jesus is essential for spiritual health. Thankfully, every believer is in a position to reflect His light into the world’s dark places.

Dear Father, help me to reflect Your light into the world around me today. May all that I say and do bear witness of Your light and truth. May others see how wonderful You are.

### **A world in darkness needs the light of Jesus.**

**INSIGHT:** The author of the gospel of John is not the same John referred to in today’s reading (John 1:6). John the Baptist, the “man sent from God,” was the fulfillment of the “messenger” prophesied in Malachi 3:1 (see Mark 1:2-3). His main task was to introduce Jesus to the world and “to bear witness of the Light” (John 1:7-8). The miraculous circumstances of John’s birth are told in Luke 1:5-80. He was probably a cousin of Jesus (Luke 1:36), had the privilege to baptize Him (Matt. 3:13-15), and was imprisoned and later beheaded by Herod (14:1-12). His ministry is recorded in Matthew 3; 11:1-11; Mark 1:1-9; and Luke 3. Jesus said that of “those born of women” (i.e., those born by ordinary human birth), none is greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11).

[By Julie Ackerman Link](#) ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

**Luke 3:3** And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**Hendriksen's translation** - He went into the whole Jordan neighborhood, proclaiming a baptism of conversion with a view to the forgiveness of sins.

**NLT Paraphrase** 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 turned to God to receive forgiveness for their sins.

**Wuest** - And he went into all the country around the Jordan making a public proclamation with such formality, gravity, and authority as must be listened to and obeyed, announcing a baptism that had to do with repentance, this baptism, a testimony because of the putting away of sins,

- **district:** Mt 3:5 Mk 1:4-5 Joh 1:28 3:26
- **preaching:** Mt 3:6,11 Mk 1:4 Joh 1:31-33 Ac 13:24 19:4 22:16
- **for forgiveness:** Lu 1:77
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:2-3 Setting the Stage for Jesus, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:3 Setting the Stage for Jesus, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:3 Setting the Stage for Jesus, Part 4](#) - John MacArthur

### **Related Passages:**

Luke 1:77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by **the forgiveness of their sins**,

Mark 1:4-5+ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem;

and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, **confessing their sins**.

Acts 19:4+ Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

John the Baptist

## JOHN'S MESSAGE: REPENT AND RECEIVE FORGIVENESS

**He came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching** ([kerusso](#)) ("He went into the whole Jordan neighborhood") Only Luke informs us that John went into all the country about Jordan **preaching**. The other evangelists (Mt 3:1–12+; Mk 1:1–8+; John 1:15, 28+) inform us that the multitudes came to Him. The word must have spread about his ministry in the desert and so people came out to hear him. That is one method of outreach. But apparently he also went himself to every inhabited area around the river Jordan where people lived.

How did John come into the district? "In the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17+), with "a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Mt 3:4+, cf 2 Ki 1:8). And notice the first word - he came **preaching!** And from Lk 3:18+ we see that he **preached the Gospel** ([euaggelizo](#) [gives us our "evangelize"] in [imperfect tense](#) = over and over). A good pattern to follow as we go out into the wilderness of this lost world! (Minus the camel hair garment of course!).

**MacArthur on district around the Jordan** - That John's entire ministry was spent in the district around the Jordan River (cf. Mt. 3:6, 13; John 1:28; 3:23, 26; 10:40) in no way diminished his enormous popularity (cf. Mt. 3:5+; Mk 1:5+).

**Preaching** ([kerusso](#) - present tense - continually proclaiming) a **baptism** ([baptisma](#)) of **repentance** ([metanoia](#) - an "about/face" in the heart) **for the forgiveness** ([aphesis](#) - release, remission, a sending away like the scapegoat in Lev 16:10+) of **sins** ([hamartia](#) - missing mark of God's perfect will thus falling short of the mark) - The Greek verb for **preaching** ([kerusso](#)) depicts the herald of a king who would go throughout the king's land and shout loudly, clearly and boldly (BECAUSE HE KNEW HE HAD THE BACKING OF THE KING) the exact message given to him (neither adding or subtracting - cf Dt 4:2+, Dt 12:32+, Rev 22:18-19+, Pr 30:6) by the king (IN THIS CASE "THE WORD OF GOD" Lk 3:2)! HEAR YE! HEAR YE! Note that the message is NOT "*God has a wonderful plan for your life* (HE DOES OF COURSE)" It is not SEEKER FRIENDLY but SIN FOCUSED! It is not "*Just ask Jesus into your heart,*" but "*Humble yourself and be willing to get your heart right before God*" Don't misunderstand. Repentance is not a work that the fallen flesh can conger up. Repentance is a gift from God based on His grace and kindness, Paul asking rhetorically "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the **kindness of God leads** (present tense - continually) you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4+).

**TECHNICAL NOTE** - **baptism** ([baptisma](#)) consists of processes of immersion, submersion & emergence. Figurative and literal senses.

(1) of John's baptism -- Lu 3:3-10. See Lk 1:77+, Acts 19:4+

(2) of a baptism of "suffering" Mk 10:38, 39+

(3) of the Holy Spirit Acts 1:5+ so if baptizo means to have a change of identity then in this verse in Acts Jesus is referring to being baptized with the Holy Spirit which means an identification with the Holy Spirit so as to change the identity of the one who has been baptized, from self focused to Savior focused. Mt 3:11+, Lk 3:16+ also refers to the Holy Spirit's baptism

(4) baptism of fire (judgment) -- see Mt 3:11,12+, Lk 3:16+ -- when Christ comes you are going to be identified with Christ or not and if NOT you are already under judgment (Jn 3:18+, Rev 20:15+).

(5) Rite of Christian baptism - the symbolic act: Acts 16:30-33+ Note "believe" precedes "baptized" (cf order in Mk 16:16+, Acts 8:12+, Acts 18:8+).

**Robertson** notes that **Baptism of repentance** refers to "a **baptism** the characteristic of which was **repentance**; which involved an obligation to repent. Heralded a repentance kind of **baptism** (genitive case, genus case), a baptism marked by **repentance**." **NET** adds that this "**baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** was a call for preparation for the arrival of the Lord's salvation. To participate in this baptism was a recognition of the need for God's forgiveness with a sense that one needed to live differently as a response to it (Luke 3:10–14)." The problem with this baptism (as with any baptism) is that it is merely an outward sign of a genuine change in one's heart. However, sadly, since it was an external act, baptism could be performed without any change in a person's heart. How many are baptized today who have never truly been born again? Only God knows.

**Warren Wiersbe** on **baptism** - Centuries before, Israel had crossed the Jordan (a national baptism) to claim their Promised Land. Now God summoned them to turn from sin and enter His spiritual kingdom....A unique feature about John's ministry was **baptism** (Luke 20:1–8+; John 1:25–28+). **Baptism** was nothing new to the people, for the Jews baptized Gentile proselytes **ED**: See [note](#)



[below](#)). 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 (Acts 19:4+ "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him Who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."), while Christian baptism looks *back* to the finished work of Christ. But there was something even beyond John's **baptism**, and that was the baptism that the Messiah would administer (Luke 3:16+). He would baptize believers with the Holy Spirit, and this began at Pentecost (Acts 1:5+; Acts 2:1ff+). Today, the moment a sinner trusts Christ, he or she is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). (Scroll to page 147 in [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

The most significant question is were the Jews who received the **baptism** of John genuinely saved? Most likely not that many were truly saved. **John MacArthur** explains that "while there were various ceremonial washings in Judaism (cf. Heb. 6:2+), there was no **baptism** of Jews. But while there was no baptism of Jews in Judaism, the Jews did baptize Gentile converts to Judaism (Gentile [proselytes](#)). Thus, those who "were being baptized by [John] in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins" (Mt. 3:6), were publicly acknowledging that they were no better than the Gentiles. Their sins had separated them from the true and living God (cf. Isa 59:2) and cut them off from covenant blessings. For Jewish people to place themselves on the same level as the despised Gentiles was astonishing, and demonstrates the power of John's preaching. **Unfortunately, few being baptized by John were truly repentant.** The nation would later reject Jesus when He failed to meet their expectations of a political Messiah, who would deliver them from the Romans. Others were superficial from the start...**But those few (Mt 7:13–14+) who acknowledged their sinful condition and alienation from God and turned to Him in repentant faith were saved.**" (See [Luke Commentary](#)) (See [note below](#) and also [Bock's Comment below](#))

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, are you sowing the seed of the good news in your sphere of influence? Remember God's good Word never returns empty (Isaiah 55:11)!

**Robert Stein** has an interesting comment on **repentance** - "**Repentance**" here literally means a change of mind but refers more broadly to the human dimension involved in the experience of conversion in contrast to the divine element (regeneration)....The message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins is a central theme in Luke-Acts and must always be a central part of the gospel message.cf. Luke 4:18; 5:17–32; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 8:22 (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#)) (**Ed:** To be sure repentance must be a personal choice, but Scripture teaches that it is a gracious gift of God - cf Ro 2:4, Acts 3:26, Acts 11:18, Acts 5:31, 2 Ti 2:25).

**A baptism of repentance** - (Revised English Bible = a baptism in token of repentance') John was calling for a radical turning from sin that was clearly manifest by demonstrable fruits of righteousness (cf Lk 3:8+). Jesus' first sermon in Matthew and Mark began with the same call...

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent** ([aorist imperative](#) = "Do this now!" "Do not delay!" [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) for (explains why repentance is urgent!) the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 4:17+)

And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **Repent** ([present imperative](#) = speaks of a "lifestyle" of repenting thus some believers in behind the old "Iron Curtain" in Europe were called "Repenters"! see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **believe** ([present imperative](#)) in the Gospel." (Mark 1:14-15+)

**Gotquestions on the baptism of John** (Mark 1:4) – as John the Baptist preached repentance of sins in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, he baptized people in the Jordan. Those who were baptized by John were showing their faith in John's message and their need to confess their sin (Mark 1:5+). In Acts 18:24–25+, a disciple of John's named Apollos preaches in Ephesus; however, only knowing the baptism of John and the need for repentance, he needed to be further instructed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Later in the same city, Acts 19:1–7+, Paul encounters some more followers of John. These disciples had been baptized for repentance, but they had not heard of the new birth or the Holy Spirit. Paul taught them the whole message of salvation in Christ, and they received the message and were subsequently baptized in Jesus' Name. (Excerpt from an interesting article entitled [What are the seven baptisms mentioned in the Bible, and what do they mean?](#))

**Darrell Bock** on John's **baptism** - John's baptism is unique to him and is grounded in his prophetic office. It is a call to commitment and includes a recognition that God is coming. It is neither the washing of a separated covenant community (Qumran) nor an initiatory rite (Gentile [proselytes](#)). Unlike traditional Judaism, it is not a religious act related to bringing sacrifices. Rather, it is an affirmation, a washing that looks with hope for God's (**Ed:** Messiah's) coming and lives in light of one's relationship to Him (regarding this future looking and living see [Bock's note below](#)). This attitude is much like the NT emphasis on a life of faith. (See [Luke Exegetical Commentary](#)). (See [note below](#))

**What was John the Baptist promising his followers when he baptized them?** John the Baptist was the forerunner of our Lord. As the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, he was announcing that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament was

soon coming (Mt 3:2). Until Jesus' baptism, he did not know for certain that, indeed, Jesus was this Messiah (cf John 1:32-34). **John's baptism** was a baptism of repentance, an acknowledgement of sin, and of the need for the forgiveness of sins which Messiah (the "Lamb of God") would bring about. The baptism was the symbol of their acknowledgement of sin, and of their need for a Savior. It was a preparatory baptism, but (as we see in Acts 19:4+ "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him Who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.") it did not preclude the need for "believer's baptism," once they had come to faith in Jesus as that promised Messiah. This is why the church baptized new believers, and why believers today should be baptized as well. ([Bible.org](http://Bible.org))

**Matthew Henry** - The scope and design of John's ministry were, to bring the people from their sins (**ED**: NOT EXACTLY "[SEEKER FRIENDLY](#)" OR "[EASY BELIEVISM](#)"!), and to their Saviour. He came preaching, not a sect, or party, but a profession; the sign or ceremony was washing with water. By the words here used John preached the necessity of repentance, in order to the remission of sins, and that the baptism of water was an outward sign of that inward cleansing and renewal of heart, which attend, or are the effects of true repentance, as well as a profession of it. Here is the fulfilling of the Scriptures, Isaiah 40:3, in the ministry of John.

**John MacArthur** on the nature of **repentance** - Saving repentance never exists except in partnership with faith. It is impossible to have true faith in Jesus Christ apart from true repentance from sin or true repentance from sin apart from true faith. They are two sides of the same work of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their sin and draw them to Christ. It must be clearly understood that repentance is not a human work that earns salvation. Repentance is not a pre-salvation effort by sinners to set their lives right that God rewards by saving them. In repentance sinners recognize their dire condition, acknowledge that they are unable to save themselves, and turn to Jesus Christ as the only One who can save them. Left to themselves, the unregenerate will never come to that conclusion, since they love darkness rather than light (John 3:19), and are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). The conviction that produces repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit, who "convict[s] the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). (See [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**J C Ryle** offers this descriptive definition of **repentance** - **Repentance** is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance**." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

One of the best illustrations of **genuine repentance** is found in Paul's description of the saints at Thessalonica...

For they themselves (other believers in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) what kind of a reception we had with you, and **how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1Th 1:9; 1:10±)

**In Acts 20:21+** Paul declares that he was "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance** toward God and **faith** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C H Spurgeon** wrote that "**Repentance** and **faith** must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post on which its hinges are fixed. A door without a doorpost to hang on is not a door at all, while a doorpost without the door hanging on it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder, and these two he has made inseparable—repentance and faith)

**J C Ryle** wrote... There can be no true **repentance** without **faith**. You may cast away your old habits, as the serpent casts off his skin—but if you are not resting all upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and looking to be saved by simple faith in Him, you may be wise in your own eyes—but you are just ignorant of the root and fountain, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in all true gospel religion. You may tell us you have repented—but if you have not at the same time laid hold on Christ, you have hitherto received the grace of God in vain.

**Related Resource:**

- [Great quotes on repentance primarily from Puritan writers](#)

**W E Vine** (commenting on a parallel passage in Mk 1:4+) says that "The repentance to which (John) called the people was a change of mind involving a confession of sin and producing an alteration of attitude toward God. Not only was the intellect to be affected but the persons themselves. John preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4), that is to say, baptism as an (external) evidence of a change of heart toward God, leading to acceptance of Christ (see Acts 19:4+ = "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.")"

**John Martin** - John's **baptism** was associated with repentance, that is, it outwardly pictured an inner change of heart. The word "for" (eis) refers back to the whole "**baptism of repentance**." The baptism did not save anyone, as is clear from what follows (Lk 3:7–14). Repentance was "**unto**" (literal rendering of eis) or resulted in sins forgiven. Since John's function was to be Christ's forerunner, so also his baptism prefigured a different baptism (Luke 3:16) (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels](#))

**Darrell Bock** helps us understand John's **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** -

The final characteristic mentioned about this baptism is its goal. It is directed *toward*, (eis, for), the **forgiveness of sins**. This statement could be read to suggest that some type of total forgiveness and efficacy is found in John's baptism that makes the experience one of "becoming saved." However, this understanding reads back more into the event than the time of the event and the presentation of Luke will allow. John is a preparatory figure (Lk 1:17+ = "*It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*", Luke 1:76–77+; Schürmann 1969: 154–57). He prepares a people for God. Most importantly, John says that his baptism is nothing compared to the baptism that the Mightier One brings (Lk 3:16+). **So John's baptism is a prophetic eschatological(ED: PREDICTIVE OF A FUTURE BAPTISM Lk 3:16+) washing; that is, it is a baptism of promise that looks to the greater baptism of the Spirit** (Schürmann 1969: 158–60). **It points forward to the cleansing that comes to those who respond to Messiah's offer with faith. This association of Spirit and cleansing was mentioned in the OT** (Ezek. 36:25–27+; Zech. 13:1+). The washing in the Jordan adds symbolism, picturing either repentance (Isa. 1:16–17+; Jer. 4:14) or divine cleansing (Ps. 51:7–9+; Isa. 4:2–6+; Ezek. 37:23+; Jer. 33:8+) or, perhaps, both ([Nolland 1989: 141](#)). If there be any doubt that Luke understands John in this prophetic and eschatological fashion, a glance at Acts 19:1–10+ ends any such uncertainty. Disciples who know only of John are to accept immediately the baptism tied to Jesus. Acts 19:4+ makes it clear that John's baptism is not complete in itself, but points to faith in Jesus (also Acts 13:24+). Thus, John's baptism represented for its precross Israelite audience a commitment to a new approach to God resulting in a life of fruitfulness for God and expectation of the eschaton....**In short, John's baptism was a step on the way to the Promised One's forgiveness. The repentance in view here will not only make one alter the way one lives, but also will cause one to see "the Mightier One to come" as the promise of God. To submit to this baptism is to confess one's commitment to this perspective. This is the essence of John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** (See [Luke - Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

**For the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins (hamartia)** - Genuine repentance results in God sending away our sins (like the scapegoat was sent away on the Day of Atonement - cf Lev 16:21, 22+). However see Bock's comments above which suggest that John's "forgiveness" was in a sense preparatory and so pointed to the total forgiveness found only in Jesus, in faith and trust in Him.

John's father Zacharias had prophesied that his son would proclaim forgiveness of sins "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By **the forgiveness of their sins**." (Lk 1:76-77+)

## Jewish Proselyte Baptism

Although Wiersbe and MacArthur allude to John's baptism and analogous to a Gentile proselyte baptism, there is no Scripture that definitely supports this assessment.

**MacArthur** - Still more amazing, many of those who heard John preach were willing to be baptized by him—a proselyte baptism normally reserved for Gentiles converting to Judaism. By accepting baptism at his hands, the Jews were acknowledging themselves to be outside the covenants and the promises, and no better than uncircumcised Gentiles. But despite John's forceful condemnation of their sin and his call for them to repent, the people kept coming to hear the prophet announcing Messiah's arrival. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** agrees with MacArthur - Baptism was a rite of cleansing in a number of religions. 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. 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 hardly with Gentile sinners, but that the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, would be safe. He removes this fancied security" (See [Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#)).

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Baptism-Jewish proselyte baptism was performed upon Gentiles who converted to Judaism. It was not for Israelites. John's baptism required repentance for everyone, and "all the people of Israel," like everyone else, had to receive baptism. This shows that John's baptism and not Jewish proselyte baptism, is the most direct antecedent to Christian baptism. Proselyte baptism showed that the converts belonged to the covenant people of Israel; Christian baptism showed that the converts belonged to Jesus Christ.

**Charles Swindoll** - John began preaching repentance and baptizing people in the wilderness. Jewish baptism was a rite in which a new convert to Judaism was ceremonially immersed in water as a symbol of once-for-all cleansing from sin before entering the Hebrew covenant community. It was intended for Gentile proselytes, not Jews already born into God's covenant with Abraham. So John gave the rite of proselyte baptism a new application when he called Jews to a baptism of repentance. In effect, he was saying, "Because of your sin, you are outside of Abraham's covenant with God. You must repent like a Gentile and come to God as if for the first time." As a result, earnest Jews came in droves! Nevertheless, John admitted that his baptism was merely symbolic and quickly turned the discussion away from water baptism—which itself pointed to the Messiah—toward the One he had come to announce. After all, he was merely a witness to the truth, not the source of truth. He was only the lampstand, not the light. (See [Insights on Acts](#))

Other writers such as **Henry Morris** say "Some have suggested that John's baptism was a sort of "proselyte baptism." However, there is no such thing as proselyte baptism mentioned in the Old Testament, the writings of Josephus, Philo, or any other literature of the apostolic era or earlier. John's baptism was true Christian baptism." ([The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Arnold Fruchtenbaum** a well-known Jewish believer writes " Baptism, an ordinance that was Jewish in origin, should be understood as an identification or association with a person, a message, or a group. For example, baptism was practiced when a proselyte converted to Judaism, and it signified that they were now to be identified with Judaism. John the Baptist's baptism was identification with the message of John, and the commitment to accept the one John pointed out to be the Messiah. It was not the baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that Jesus commanded his followers to undergo. Paul re-baptized some disciples of John who had not yet heard about Jesus, in Acts 19:1-7. Believer's baptism is the identification of oneself with three things: the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah.

**R C Foster** in **Studies in the Life of Christ** has a lengthy comment - A second effort to discredit the divine origin of John's baptism was based on the supposition that the **Jews had begun to practice proselyte baptism** in the period between the close of the Old Testament and the coming of John. **John is supposed to have adopted a current Jewish practice of baptizing Gentiles as a ceremony inducting proselytes into the nation of Israel.** This offered a means for unbelievers to deny the divine origin of John's baptism, for the Jews did not even claim any divine inspiration for their leaders after the close of the Old Testament canon with Ezra. But the most painstaking search of the literature of the period has failed to show any such practice as proselyte baptism among the Jews until the third century a.d. The Jews of this later period found themselves in strong competition with the Christians. They saw what a profoundly impressive ordinance Christian baptism was. They began a countermove of practicing proselyte baptism into Israel. In our own times the controversy over baptism which has taken place over so many years has led to the most careful search of all available material. Alexander Campbell in the debate with Nathan Rice cited the fact that there is absolutely no trace in extant literature of any practice of proselyte baptism by the Jews until the third century a.d. In our own century this diligent search has continued, but no evidence has been found to substantiate any earlier practice by the Jews. Jewish scholars eager to undermine the claims of the Christian gospel to divine origin have been particularly zealous to search in their own literature for such evidence. But it has been fruitless. Jewish writers have published three monographs attempting to prove that John borrowed his baptism from the proselyte baptism being practiced by the Jews before his time.

**Steven Nicoletti** - This leads us to our second question: do we have sufficient evidence to support the claim that Jewish proselyte baptism was being practiced in the period of the apostolic church? Jeremias argues that we do, pointing to what he believes is a reference to proselyte baptism in a dispute between the houses of Shammai and Hillel recorded in both the Mishnah (Pesahim 8:8) and the Tosefta (Pesahim 7:14). He also relies on the claim that Jews began to consider Gentiles ritually impure in the first century BC, making such a washing necessary at conversion. Recent scholarship, however, has thrown both of these claims into question. In her monograph on the subject, Christine Hayes argues that the rabbinic ascription of ritual impurity to Gentiles originated in the first two centuries AD,<sup>37</sup> and not the first century BC as Jeremias claims. If correct, this would eliminate the need for a washing to remove Gentile impurity in the first half of the first century AD.

Shaye J. D. Cohen has argued persuasively that interpreting the immersion mentioned by the House of Shammai in m. Pesahim 8:8 and t. Pesahim 7:14 as proselyte baptism 'is almost certainly wrong', explaining that in both texts the immersion is presented as

something to be done in preparation for the Passover, after conversion is complete, and not as a part of the conversion process itself. Agreeing with Cohen's work, Hayes points out that in the Mishnah's account, the immersion prescribed for the new convert before the Passover is presented as a parallel to the immersion prescribed to a bereaved Jew before the Passover. She also argues that the immersion described by these two texts is not done to remove impurity, but to bestow sanctity before one consumes the Passover.<sup>40</sup>

If Cohen is correct, then the earliest explicit reference we have to proselyte baptism dates from the late first or early second century AD, and it describes how even though proselyte baptism was being recognised as an essential part of conversion by some authorities by that time, it was not being viewed as such by all. While some have argued that the establishment of proselyte baptism must have preceded the emergence of Christian baptism because the Jews would not have adopted a practice that may have been viewed by many as a Christian custom, others have pointed out that this argument fails to recognise 1) the reality that Judaism had a number of washing rituals from which proselyte baptism could have been derived, 2) the possibility that, rather than one deriving from the other, proselyte baptism and Christian baptism may share some features because they both developed out of the same historical and cultural context, and 3) the fact that there are actually many differences between the administration of proselyte baptism and Christian baptism.

After considering the data, and in light of recent scholarship, it seems that we have insufficient evidence to either claim that proselyte baptism shaped Jewish presuppositions regarding infant initiation in the period of the apostolic church, or to know with confidence how it would have shaped those presuppositions if it was being practiced at the time. Circumcision and infant participation in Jewish religious life are therefore likely to be our most reliable indicators of Jewish expectations regarding infant initiation in the first century. (Excerpt from [Infant Baptism In The First-Century Presupposition Pool](#))

**Andreas J. Köstenberger** - It is difficult to know when the Jews began to practice proselyte baptism as an initiation rite for Gentile converts to Judaism, so we cannot assume it was a precursor of John's and Christian baptism. (He has an entire section on Proselyte Baptism in his 24 page article "[Baptism in the Gospels.](#)" )

[Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels \(borrow a copy - go to page 386 for following discussion\)](#) - **Jewish Water Rites.** The discussion about what precedents there may have been for John's baptism has been a heated one among scholars (see Baptism). This is in part the case because it is uncertain when proselyte baptism was first practiced by early Jews. In addition to the matter of OT water rituals having to do with ceremonial uncleanness, there is also the vexed question of what, if any, connection the Baptist may have had with the Qumran community (see section 1 above). It is also possible that John's rite was something new and different, without precedent. With regard to the matter of **proselyte baptism**, several considerations are relevant. (1) The Mishna (m. Pesah. 8.8) records a dispute between the school of Hillel and Shammai concerning whether or not a newly circumcised proselyte may immerse himself and eat the Paschal meal. If this dispute goes back to Hillel and Shammai, then it pre-dates John's ministry. (2) The Babylonian Talmud (b. Yebam. 46a) also records a dispute between two first-century A.D. rabbis about proselyte baptism and its necessity. (3) In view of the Jewish belief that Gentiles in general were unclean, the likelihood is strong that there was some rite of initiation such as proselyte baptism for female converts to early Judaism. Thus, proselyte baptism probably did exist during John's era (but cf. Pusey, Betz, Badia and Taylor, McKnight). **However, we must note several differences between John's practice and that of Jewish proselyte baptism.** (1) Apparently, John was the active immerser when he offered his rite, but Jewish proselytes immersed themselves. (2) John performed his rite primarily on Jews who, of course, were never subject to Jewish proselyte baptism. Thus, one may argue that John was practicing proselyte baptism on Jews, which suggests that he did not feel their heredity was an adequate safeguard from God's coming eschatological wrath. Indeed, it seems he felt Israel was lost, just like the Gentile world, unless they repented and received his baptism. **There are also salient differences between John's practice and both the water lustrations mentioned in the OT and those found at Qumran, including the cleansing ritual in the mikwâ.** (1) John's rite, like proselyte baptism, was a unique and unrepeatable ritual so far as we can tell. (2) There is no indication that John's rite had anything to do with purely ceremonial uncleanness caused, for instance, by touching a corpse. Apparently, it is only or at least primarily moral uncleanness that is at issue in John's rite. (3) John's baptism seems to have been an initiation rite, not a rite to continue to maintain purity or cleanliness for one who was already basically in right relationship with Yahweh. (4) There is no evidence that John required a probationary period before being immersed, nor any prior demonstration of one's earnestness to obey God other than the willingness to come forward and be baptized. When one considers the Qumran initiatory water rite, both the probationary period and self-immersion appear to distinguish the Qumran practice from that of the Baptist. Quite possibly, **the Baptist's rite was uniquely unrepeatable** (cf. Badia). Note that John may have been drawing on the ancient idea of trial by water ordeal, in which case the rite is connected with his proclamation about coming wrath and is a visible symbol of preparation for that coming event. One may compare the idea of circumcision being an act invoking the oath curse on oneself, and thus of being cut off by God, if one does not go on to obey the covenant.

**James Garrett - JEWISH PROSELYTE BAPTISM** Four questions pertaining to the baptism of Gentile proselytes into Judaism need to be answered, namely, its practice, its significance, its time of origin, and its likely influence upon Christian baptism.

Rabbinical sources no earlier than the second century AD refer in some manner to the baptism of Gentile proselytes. The baptism was self-immersion and total bodily immersion in "living water." It was required of all who entered Judaism, and such a baptized

proselyte was likened to "a newborn child." It included the examination and catechizing of the proselyte. Children born to proselyte parents after their own baptism were not subsequently baptized, and children baptized as part of a proselyte family had the right after attaining maturity to renounce Judaism without penalty of apostasy.<sup>44</sup> The baptism was validated by the presence of witnesses and was to be accompanied by male circumcision and, at least to AD 70, by the offering of sacrifice.

Proselyte baptism has been defined as "the application to the foreigner of a familiar and ancient rite of washing in order to confer religious and social 'fitness.'" Gilmore has set forth a fivefold interpretation of the significance of Jewish proselyte baptism:

- Ø It was for convinced and instructed converts, and it was a witnessed ceremony....
- Ø It was an initiation ceremony, marking a break with the old life, and a joyful acceptance of the new....
- Ø It was an act of dedication [to Israel's God]....
- Ø It carried with it the idea of cleansing....
- Ø It was more than a symbol or declaration; it was an effective sign.

The time of origin of Jewish proselyte baptism was a debated issue during the twentieth century. The evidence favoring its origin after AD 65 is threefold: the rabbinic sources date from the second century AD; there is total silence as to Jewish proselyte baptism in the Old Testament, the Old Testament Apocrypha, Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament; and the Jews might have adopted baptism from the early Christians. The evidence for its origin prior to AD 65 is twofold: the allusions to proselyte baptism in the fourth book of the Sibylline Oracles (c. AD 80) and by Epictetus (c. AD 94) can be taken to imply that the practice was well established; and the second-century rabbinical statements can be similarly understood. The modern authors who have held to the earlier time of origin, beginning in 1887 with Alfred Edersheim (1825–89), constitute a large majority,<sup>51</sup> but three major scholars have held to the late origin. Only if the earlier time of origin should be accepted, can Jewish proselyte baptism be taken as an antecedent of Christian baptism.

Many of the procedural aspects of proselyte baptism, that is, the examination and catechizing, the mode of total immersion, and the presence of witnesses, may be acknowledged as possibly having influenced Christian baptism. Both Gavin and Beasley-Murray<sup>54</sup> have seen similarities between Jewish proselyte baptism and the descriptions of Christian baptism in *The Teaching of the Twelve* and in Hippolytus's *The Apostolic Tradition*. But some have denied any influence. Beasley-Murray has challenged Joachim Jeremias's conclusion that the instructional aspect, the ritual nature, and the theological language of proselyte baptism carried over noncoincidentally and nonaccidentally to Christian baptism. For Beasley-Murray, the decisive moment for the proselyte was that of circumcision, not baptism. Moreover, proselyte baptism knew no "unity with the Messiah who is Son of Man and Second Adam and who died and rose for the race" and no "belief that the age of resurrection and the life of the Kingdom of God has dawned in the rising of the Messiah." (Systematic Theology)

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**My Conclusion** - While I have not performed an exhaustive study to determine if proselyte baptism was practiced in Jesus' day, it is clear that some respected writers feel that it was while others question its existence in the first century. Therefore my conclusion is "inconclusive."

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**Preaching** ([present tense](#) = continually proclaiming) ([2784](#))([kerusso](#)) from [kerux](#) = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes; [kerugma](#) = the thing preached or the message) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. Kerusso means to preach, proclaim, publish, always with the suggestion of **formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed**. The idea is to preach or proclaim with the goal to persuade, urge or warn to comply. John was to preach the Word and not coerce. It is the Spirit Who convicts of sin and convinces of need for righteousness (Jn 16:8).

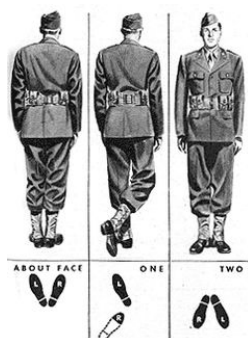
[Kerusso](#) was used of the official whose duty it was to proclaim loudly and extensively the coming of an earthly king, even as our gospel is to clearly announce the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16<sup>+</sup>)! The Imperial Herald would enter a town in behalf of the Emperor, and make a public proclamation of the message which his Sovereign ordered him to give, doing so with such formality, gravity, and authority as to emphasize that the message must be heeded! (Think about this in regard to the Gospel of God instead of the decree of a man! cf 1Th 2:13<sup>+</sup>). He gave the people exactly what the Emperor bade him give, nothing more, nothing less. He did not dare add to the message or take away from it. Should this not be the example and pattern every preacher and teacher of the holy gospel of God seeks and strives to emulate, yea, even doing so with fear and trembling! ("not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts" see 1Th 2:4<sup>+</sup>)

The original meaning of the root word [kerux](#) was a "herald at the royal court." Homer used kerusso and kerux in this connection. They not only announced the coming of the prince, but they also carried his commands to the uttermost corners of his realm. As the government of Greece became more republican, these heralds came to serve the state rather than the court. Certain qualities were required of heralds. They must have powerful voices, so voice auditions were often held. In the case of John the Baptist he did not need to audition

because he was enabled by the Holy Spirit to boldly proclaim the good news of repentance. Also the secular heralds had to be capable of calming down an unruly mob, in order to faithfully communicate the command. Frankly, John the Baptist's message was not to calm them down but to stir them up calling on them to repent! An honest disposition was also required, as a protection against the exaggeration of a royal decree. The importance of John's message could hardly be exaggerated as it is the most important message any lost soul can hear! Furthermore, the secular heralds could make no additions or subtractions from the received message. John spoke the Word of God that came from him without any additions or subtractions!

Luke's use of **kerruso** (17 of 61 NT uses) - Lk. 3:3; Lk. 4:18; Lk. 4:19; Lk. 4:44; Lk. 8:1; Lk. 8:39; Lk. 9:2; Lk. 12:3; Lk. 24:47; Acts 8:5; Acts 9:20; Acts 10:37; Acts 10:42; Acts 15:21; Acts 19:13; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:31

**Baptism** (908) (**baptisma** from **bapto** = dip as in dye to color - see study of verb **baptizo**) is the result of the act of dipping, plunging, immersing, washing, something or someone. The suffix **-ma** indicates the result of dipping or sinking or baptizing while **baptismos** is the act of baptizing. Luke is not describing baptism as we normally think of it today, where a person believes in Jesus for salvation and his baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John's baptism does not produce or result in forgiveness, for no human ritual can accomplish forgiveness.



Repentance:  
"About, face!"

**Repentance** (3341) (**metanoia** from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. **Metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. **Metanoia** is a conversion in every sense of the word. Jesus' teaching would support this conclusion for our Lord declared...

I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** (**metanoëo**), than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance** (**metanoia**). (Luke 15:7+)

**Metanoia** is a key term used frequently by Luke, 5x in the Gospel and 6x in Acts, so 50% of the 22 NT uses - Matt. 3:8; Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 5:32; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 24:47; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Co. 7:9; 2 Co. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:1; Heb. 6:6; Heb. 12:17; 2 Pet. 3:9

**Forgiveness** (KJV = "remission") (859) (**aphesis** from **aphiemi** = action which causes separation and is in turn derived from **apo** = from + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) literally means to send away or to put apart, a letting go, a leaving behind, a removal. **Aphesis** refers to a remission as when one remits (pardons, cancels) a debt, or releases them from an obligation. To release from captivity. **Remission** (see [definition of English word](#)) of sins means once and for all taking them away, removing the guilt, punishment and power of sin. And so to release one's sins, is not just release from the ("legal" or forensic) charge and the just penalty of sin but also release from the power and dominion of sin (and in Heaven the release from the presence of sin and the pleasure of sin). **Vincent** on **aphesis** - The word occurs in Luke more frequently than in all the other New Testament writers combined (9/16x). Used in medical language of the relaxation of disease. Both Luke and John use the kindred verb **aphiemi**, in the same sense. Luke 4:39+; John 4:52.

**All 16 uses of aphasis** - Matt. 26:28; Mk. 1:4; Mk. 3:29; Lk. 1:77; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 4:18; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:22; Heb. 10:18

**Sins** (266) (**hamartia**) literally conveys the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow (in Homer some hundred times of a warrior hurling his spear but missing his foe). Later **hamartia** came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. **Hamartia** in the Bible signifies a departure from God's holy, perfect standard of what is right in word or deed (righteous). It pictures the idea of missing His appointed goal (His will) which results in a deviation from what is pleasing to Him. In short, sin is conceived as a missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is the Triune God Himself. As **Martin Luther** put it "*Sin is*

essentially a departure from God."

**Luke's uses of hamartia in Gospel and Acts** - Lk. 1:77; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 5:20; Lk. 5:21; Lk. 5:23; Lk. 5:24; Lk. 7:47; Lk. 7:48; Lk. 7:49; Lk. 11:4; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:60; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38; Acts 22:16; Acts 26:18;

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**J C Ryle has a few words of warning regarding repentance** - We must carefully bear in mind that *no repentance can make atonement for sin*. The blood of Christ, and nothing else, can wash away sin from man's soul. No quantity of repentance can ever justify us in the sight of God. "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." It is of the utmost importance to understand this clearly. The trouble that men bring upon their souls, by misunderstanding this subject, is more than can be expressed.

But while we say all this, we must carefully remember that *without repentance no soul was ever yet saved*. We must know our sins, mourn over them, forsake them, abhor them, or else we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing meritorious in this. It forms no part whatever of the price of our redemption. Our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. But the great fact still remains, that saved souls are always penitent souls, and that saving faith in Christ, and true repentance toward God, are never found asunder. This is a mighty truth, and one that ought never to be forgotten.

Do we ourselves repent? This, after all, is the question which most nearly concerns us. Have we been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit? Have we fled to Jesus for deliverance from the wrath to come? Do we know anything of a broken and contrite heart, and a thorough hatred of sin? Can we say, "I repent," as well as "I believe?" If not, let us not delude our minds with the idea that our sins are yet forgiven. It is written, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3.)

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### **Luke 3:3 Getting Ready for Christmas** -

I glanced through some magazines and saw article after article warning about holiday stress and telling people how to prepare for Christmas. They gave the usual advice: Do your baking early; wrap your gifts as you purchase them; don't fill every minute with activity. These are good ideas, and I'm sure you've thought of some yourself. Personally, I like to shop through catalogs when I can.

The people who listened to John the Baptist had some preparing to do too. No, not for celebrating Christmas but for the start of Jesus' public ministry (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1). John's mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah by preaching a message of repentance (Luke 3:3). In preparation for the Messiah's coming, the people were to cleanse their hearts by seeking God's forgiveness for their sins.

As we get ready to celebrate the coming of Jesus to earth, we too should heed John's message of repentance (Matthew 3:2). What's most important is to enter this season of the year with a pure heart. To do that, we need to confess our sin, turn from it, and renew our fellowship with the Lord. Then we'll be able to celebrate the Christmas season with great joy and peace. That's how to get ready for Christmas. [By David C. Egner \(Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved\)](#)

Take time this Christmastide to go  
A little way apart,  
And with the help of God prepare  
The house that is your heart.  
—Anon.

To give meaning to Christmas, give Christ first place in your heart.

## **JOHN THE BAPTIST SUMMARY**

- G J Goldberg - [John the Baptist and Josephus](#)
- [Who was John the Baptist in the Bible?](#)
- [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) - (Excerpt click link at left for full explanation) - John did for Jesus what Elijah was to have done for the coming of the Lord, but he was not Elijah reincarnated. Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah, while John the Baptist rejected that identification. How do we reconcile these two teachings? There is a key phrase in Jesus' identification of John the Baptist that must not be overlooked. He says, "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah." In other



words, John the Baptist's identification as Elijah was not predicated upon his being the actual Elijah, but upon people's response to his role. To those who were willing to believe in Jesus, John the Baptist functioned as Elijah, for they believed in Jesus as Lord. To the religious leaders who rejected Jesus, John the Baptist did not perform this function.

- [Did John the Baptist lose his faith in Jesus as the Messiah \(Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19\)?](#)
- [In what way was John the Baptist the greatest \(Matthew 11:11\)?](#)
- [What was the meaning and importance of the baptism of John the Baptist?](#)
- [Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees as a brood of vipers?](#)
- Whyte's Dictionary of Biblical Characters - [John the Baptist](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [John the Baptist](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [John the baptist](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)

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A number of passages concerning John the Baptist can be somewhat enigmatic or confusing. So here is a good summary by **William Simmons**...

Apart from Jesus Christ, John the Baptist is probably the most theologically significant figure in the Gospels. As was the case with Jesus, his birth was meticulously recorded (Luke 1:5-25+). His entrance into the world was marked by angelic proclamation and divine intervention (Luke 1:57-80). John's birth not only parallels that of Jesus, but echoes the momentous occasion of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:15-22 ; 21:1-7). John is clearly a pivotal figure in the salvation history of God.

Although his formative years were lived in obscurity in the desert (Luke 1:80), his public ministry ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence. John was that voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 40:3 ; Matthew 3:3+ ; Mark 1:2-3+; Luke 3:3-6+). In this sense his message and ministry marked the culmination of the law and the prophets, but heralded the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12 ; Luke 16:16+). So John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New.

**The central theme of his ministry was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"**(Matthew 3:2+). He was called "The Baptist" because his practice was to baptize those who responded to the message he proclaimed and sincerely (**ED**: OR AT LEAST OSTENSIBLY SINCERELY) repented of their sins (Matthew 3:1+; Mark 6:14; Luke 7:20+).

**ED COMMENT:** KEEP IN MIND THAT MANY JEWS WERE BEING BAPTIZED BY JOHN ONE WOULD EXPECT MANY IN ISRAEL WOULD BE TRUE BELIEVERS IN MESSIAH, BUT WE KNOW FROM SUBSEQUENT PASSAGES THAT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE. IN FACT MOST OF THE JEWS ULTIMATELY REJECTED JESUS AND THERE WERE ONLY 120 FOLLOWERS IN THE UPPER ROOM IN Acts 1:15. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THERE WERE NO OTHER BELIEVERS AT ALL IN JERUSALEM BUT DOES MAKE THE POINT THAT THE NUMBERS WERE NOT "MANY" AND THUS NOT CORRELATING WITH THE "MULTITUDES" WHO HAD WERE GOING OUT TO BE BAPTIZED BY JOHN (Lk 3:7+). CLEARLY THEIR PROFESSIONS BEFORE JOHN WERE JUST THAT - PROFESSIONS. [TO WIT](#), THEIR REPENTANCE WAS FALSE REPENTANCE. AND THIS IS WHY JOHN MADE THE CLEAR COMMAND TO ALL WHO PROFESSED HIS "BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE" THAT THEY MUST BRING FORTH FRUITS IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEIR REPENTANCE WAS GENUINE. JOHN EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY OF REPENTANCE BY WARNING OF THE WRATH TO COME (Lk 3:7), THE AXE AT THE ROOT OF THE FRUITLESS TREE (Lk 3:9), JESUS' BAPTISM WITH FIRE (Lk 3:16) AND BURNING OF WINNOWERED CHAFF (Lk 3:17).

**John was an end-times prophet.** He conducted his ministry with an eschatological authority that demanded immediate action. He taught that judgment is at hand. The axe is laid to the roots and God will thoroughly purge his threshing floor (Matthew 3:10-12 ; Luke 3:9,17+). And the authenticity of repentance was evidenced in very practical terms: share with those in need, eliminate graft, and prohibit extortion (Luke 3:11-14+).

**John's lifestyle was as austere as his message.** He was an ascetic living in the wilderness, clothed in camel hair and subsisting on locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4+ ; Mark 1:6). Unlike Jesus, he expected people to come to him, rather than he going to them (Matthew 3:5).

**John was no "crowd pleaser."** He willingly confronted the hypocrisy of the religious establishment (Matthew 3:7+ ; Luke 3:7+). He did not hesitate to expose the immorality of Herod and chose to die a martyr's death rather than compromise his convictions (Matthew 14:3-12 ; Mark 6:17-29+).

**All of these characteristics portray John as a fiery prophet proclaiming the apocalyptic message of God.** Indeed, Luke says that John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17+) (ED: see [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) ). He goes on to allude to Malachi 4:5+, which states that Elijah will return "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord." In fact, some contemporaries of John inquired if he were Elijah (John 1:21+). The belief that Elijah would return and prepare the way of the Lord can be traced to Malachi 3:1+, Malachi 4:5+. Such belief is also found in the extra-biblical accounts of Sirah 48:10,2 Esdras 6:2 f. The Gospels also indicate that many believed that Elijah would come first, and then the Christ (Matthew 11:14 ; 17:10 ; Mark 6:15 ; 9:11 ; Luke 9:8+). **John flatly denied that he was Elijah reincarnated**(John 1:21,25+). Nevertheless Jesus affirmed that Elijah must come first and that he had come in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11-13 ; Mark 9:12-13). John fulfilled Malachi's prophecy in a spiritual sense, rather than in a literal way.

**ADDITIONAL NOTE ON JOHN'S RELATION TO ELIJAH FROM JOHN MACARTHUR** - The question about his being Elijah introduces some important truth. At every orthodox Passover ceremony even today a cup is reserved at the table for Elijah. At the circumcision of orthodox Jewish baby boys a chair is placed for Elijah. The anticipation is that, if Elijah would ever come and sit in the chair or drink from the cup, the Messiah's arrival would be imminent. That belief is based on Malachi 4:5-6, in which the prophet predicts, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."...The Elijah prophesied by Malachi was not to be a reincarnation of the ancient prophet. Rather, as the angel of the Lord told Zacharias regarding his son, John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner would come "**in the spirit and power of Elijah**" (Luke 1:17+). John would not be the ancient prophet come back to earth but would minister in much the same style and power as had Elijah. In that way, as Jesus had told the disciples at least once before, "**[John] is Elijah, who was to come**" (Matt. 11:14). Why then, some wonder, did John himself disclaim being Elijah? When the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked him, "**Are you Elijah?**"... he said, "**I am not**" (John 1:21). He denied being Elijah because, though he knew of the prophecy of Luke 1, like Jesus, he realized the question was about a literal, reincarnated Elijah. And, though John did not share Jesus' omniscience, he doubtlessly also realized that the questioning of the priests and Levites originated from unbelief, not sincere faith. They were not interested in learning the truth but of finding a way to discredit John, just as they would later seek ways to discredit the One whose way he came to prepare. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**ADDITIONAL NOTE FROM HENDRIKSEN** on the meaning of **in the Spirit and power of Elijah** asking "Does this mean that John was Elijah? The answer is both "**No**" and "**Yes**." Not literally, as is clear from the fact that when John was asked, "**Are you Elijah?**" he truthfully answered, "I am not" (John 1:21+). But figuratively, so that Jesus even calls him Elijah (Mt. 11:13, 14; cf. Mt 17:12; Mark 9:12, 13). The solution is given here in Luke 1:17+: The "**spirit and power of Elijah**" was going to be clearly displayed in John the Baptist. Cf. Elijah's boldness, "I have not troubled Israel but you [Ahab] have" (1 Ki 18:18), with the Baptist's (Mt. 14:4), "It isn't right for you [Herod Antipas] to have her [your brother Philip's wife Herodias]." And see also Mt. 3:7+; Lk 3:7+, Lk 3:19+. (Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke)

**In this way Jesus acknowledges the central role that John played in God's plan of salvation** He was the greatest born among women because he had the privilege of pointing to the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34+). Yet as the last great prophet of the pre-Christian era, he was the least in the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:11 ; Luke 7:28+).

**John fully accepted his subordinate role to Christ.** He denied that he was the Christ and repeatedly emphasized that he was simply a witness to the Light (John 1:19-23+; cf. also John 1:6-9+ ; John 3:27-30+ ). John stated that Jesus was greater than he, and that Jesus had a more powerful ministry and baptism (Mark 1:7-8 ; Luke 3:16+ ; John 1:26-27+). He did not want to baptize Jesus, but rather desired to be baptized by Jesus (Matthew 3:13-14). John allowed his disciples to leave his own leadership and follow after Jesus (John

1:35-39 +).

**But for all of his greatness, John was merely human.** In this sense he too joined in the popular speculations about the identity of Christ. It may be that John's vision of the Messiah varied so much from what he heard and saw in Jesus, that he came to question if Jesus were really the Christ (Matthew 11:1-2 ; Luke 7:1+). The fact that Jesus was not an ascetic, and that he actively sought the fellowship of publicans and sinners may have been an offense to John and his disciples (Matthew 9:9-17 ; Matthew 11:18-19 ; Luke 7:33-34+). Jesus may have rebuked John in this regard when he said, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Matthew 11:6 ; Luke 7:23+).

Finally, even though John was merely a witness serving as a transitional figure, the impact of his life and ministry should not be underestimated. During his lifetime he had a following of disciples who shared common practices such as fasting and prayers (Matthew 9:14 ; John 1:35-37+ ; Jn 4:1-2+). John's disciples survived his death and spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Apollos was from Alexandria in North Africa and at one point knew only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-25 ). Similarly, upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul encountered about a dozen disciples of John. They too had only experienced the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7). **These instances indicate that the Baptist's movement may have had more influence than what we are able to glean from the New Testament...**

In conclusion, John the Baptist is of great theological importance in the New Testament. He ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence and paved the way for the Messiah. In the spirit of Elijah, he preached a message of repentance and baptism. In his darkest hour he questioned if Jesus was the One who was to come, or whether there would be another. He inaugurated a spiritual movement that had influence long after his death and extended throughout the Mediterranean world. ([Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

**Luke 3:4 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.**

**NET** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one shouting in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

**Wuest** - as it stands written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, A voice of one shouting in the uninhabited region, Make ready the Lord's road.

- **The voice:** Isa 40:3-5 Mt 3:3 Mk 1:3 John 1:23
- **Make ready:** Lu 1:16,17,76-79 Isa 57:14 62:10 Mal 4:6 Joh 1:7,26-36 3:28-36
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

#### **Related Passage:**

Isaiah 40:3-5 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. 4 "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Luke 1:80+ And the child ([paidion](#)) continued to grow ([auxano](#)) and to become strong ([krataioo](#)) in spirit, and he lived in the deserts ([eremos](#)) until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

## **THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS**

**As it is written** ([grapho](#) "as it stands written") **in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet** - **Written** is in the [perfect tense](#) which means it has been written at some time in the past (700 years earlier) and remains in effect or valid. The Word of God stands written. Jesus affirmed the permanence of the Word of God declaring ""Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will

not pass away." (Mt 24:35)

**THOUGHT** - Given this truth regarding the permanence of God's Word, it behooves all followers of Christ to be diligently [Memorizing His Word](#) (if you need some "key verses" to start you off on the blessing of a lifetime see [Memory Verses by Topic](#)). While there are many advantages in Memorizing the Word (allows you to take up the shield of faith when missiles of temptation come for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ; it will radically alter your prayer life as you pray God's Word from memory, etc), another advantage is that now you can effectively, efficiently [Meditate](#) (see also [Primer on Biblical Meditation](#)) on the living and active, mind renewing, life transforming Word of Truth! (see also [Primer on Biblical Meditation](#)). As you walk about during the day, the Spirit can now bring to your remembrance promises and exhortations and encouragements from the Word you have stored in your heart (Ps 119:9, 11) God promises to bless meditation exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think (Ps 1:1, 2, 3 - see notes [Ps 1:1](#); [1:2](#); [1:3](#); Joshua 1:8+) As **Spurgeon** said "Read the Bible carefully, and then meditate and meditate and meditate. So we must, by meditation, tread the clusters of truth, if we would get the wine of consolation there from."

**THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING** ([boáo](#) in present tense) **IN THE WILDERNESS, "MAKE READY** ([hetoimazo](#)) **THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE** ([poieo](#)) **HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.** - Note that in the NAS direct quotations from the OT are identified by all capital letters. John the Baptist was the voice who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy recorded almost 700 years earlier, a fact that would serve to authenticate to the Jews (at least those who knew Isaiah's prophecy) that John the Baptist was a prophet sent from God. John fulfilled it for example by spending most of his life in the **wilderness**, Luke recording that John "continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the **deserts** (wilderness) until the day of his public appearance to Israel." (Lk 1:80+)

John's cry of "**Make ready** ([aorist imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) **the way of the Lord,**" and "**make** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) **His paths straight**" were descriptions of what happened when ancient kings would visit a region. Before the king would arrive the roads were cleared of debris and other hazards. In effect John's cry was not for the Jews to make literal paths smooth and straight but a cry for the people of Israel to prepare their hearts for the coming of their King the Messiah. In context the way they would **make ready the way** and **make His paths straight** refers to genuine repentance, so that their King would have "easy access" (so to speak) to their hearts.

**NET Note** adds that this is "probably an allusion to preparation through repentance as the verb (**make** = [poieo](#)) reappears in Lk 3:8, 10, 11, 12, 14."

**John Phillips** has this note on John's cry - "The Hebrews had fallen on bad times quite apart from Roman oppression. Dead formalism characterized their religion. The roots of this formalism, which had been sprouting in Malachi's day, now ran deep. Rabbinical tradition had largely replaced the Bible. John the Baptist knew all about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the skepticism of the Sadducees, the materialism and opportunism of the Herodians, and the fanaticism of the Zealots. The faith of the fathers, applauded in Hebrews 11, had now become "the Jews' religion" (Gal. 1:13). Someone needed to cut a path through the tangled undergrowth of the deadening, man made tradition. The Messiah was coming! It was high time that someone spoke out. So John became "**the voice of one crying in the wilderness**" John did not seek the big cities, and he did not stalk the streets of Jerusalem. Rather, he sought solitary, lonely places that were off the beaten track down by the riverside. He did not go to the people. He made the people come to him, and come they did until vast crowds thronged into the wilds to hear him preach...."**Make his paths straight!**" cried John. It was a clarion call to his own countrymen to clean up their lives (**ED: TO REPENT!**) and clear away all moral and religious obstacles that might hinder the coming King. (See [Exploring the Gospel of Mark](#))

As **John MacArthur** emphasizes "Nothing more convincingly demonstrates God's control over history than fulfilled prophecy. One such prophecy is Isaiah 40:3-5, the subject of these verses....John's fulfillment of this prophecy also shows the continuity between his ministry and the Old Testament, something critically important if the Jewish people were to accept him as a prophet of God." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Notice MacArthur's comment affirming the value of studying prophecy. There are often two extreme approaches to Biblical prophecy - (1) Don't study it at all (or very little) as it is felt to be too difficult to comprehend and too controversial. (2) Study it and see prophetic fulfillment in every current event, etc. Prophecy was not given to make us smarter sinners, but to make us more like the Savior. When we see fulfillment of God's prophecies (e.g., over 300 prophecies of the Messiah), our faith is strengthened to believe that He will fulfill all of the prophecies that are yet future. See a [Brief Primer on Prophecy](#) (scroll down for "Why Study Prophecy?" See also [Bible Prophecy](#)).

Approximately 25% or one quarter of the Bible was prophecy at the time it was written. Dr John Walvoord adds that "The revelation of prophecy in Scripture serves as an important evidence that the Scriptures are accurate in their interpretation of the future. Because approximately half (50%) of the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled in a **literal** way, it gives a

proper intellectual basis for assuming that prophecy yet to be fulfilled will likewise have a literal fulfillment. At the same time it justifies the conclusion that the Bible is inspired of the Holy Spirit and that prophecy which goes far beyond any scheme of man is instead a revelation by God of that which is certain to come to pass. The fact that prophecy has been fulfilled serves as a guide to interpret the prophecies which are yet ahead. (See [Every Prophecy of the Bible](#))

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**Is written** (1125) ([grapho](#) from root **graph-** = scratch on or engrave; English = graph) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (Jn 8:6), paper, etc. **It is written** occurs 76 times in the **NAS**. When we were children and our parents told us to do something and we questioned "Why?", the answer was usually "Because I said so!". Why are we commanded to be holy? Because God said so! A popular saying is "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." This sounds good but isn't accurate because God's Word is true, regardless of whether we believe it or not. A more accurate "saying" would be "God said it, that settles it!" **It is written** should put a stop to every complaint or excuse. Paul is saying don't judge but remember you will appear before Me to give an account (as the next verse clarifies). This sobering thought should motivate us to obey this injunction.

**Crying** (shouting) (994) ([boáo](#) from **boé** (995) means raise a cry, call or shout of joy, pain, etc, by using one's voice with unusually high volume (imagine John shouting out). In several of the NT contexts (and many more of the [Septuagint = LXX](#) uses) crying out was in the context of one seeking help or assistance. Some uses mean simply a loud cry but in some of these situations the cry reflects a state of agitation. The Greeks used **boáo** to describe the sound of certain things such as the wind and waves (to sound, resound, roar, howl).

**Thayer** makes an interesting comparison between 3 Greek words that all convey the idea of to call out or cry out, noting that **kaleo** in classic usage meant "to cry out" for a purpose, **boáo** meant "to cry out" as a result of or manifestation of an inner feeling and **krazo** meant to cry out harshly, often with an inarticulate and brutish sound. In short, **kaleo** suggests intelligence, **boáo** suggests sensibilities and **krazo** suggests instincts. In sum, of these three words, **boáo** was the Greek word that especially conveys the idea of a cry for help.

**Make ready** (aorist imperative) (2090) ([hetoimazo](#) from **heteos** = fitness - see also [hetoimasia](#)) means to make ready, specifically to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity. God has been preparing salvation even before the foundation of the world, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." (Gal 4:4+) Inherent in the word **prepared** are the ideas of design and determined. God has designed salvation and He has determined salvation. All Luke's uses -Lk. 1:17; Lk. 1:76; Lk. 2:31; Lk. 3:4; Lk. 9:52; Lk. 12:20; Lk. 12:47; Lk. 17:8; Lk. 22:8; Lk. 22:9; Lk. 22:12; Lk. 22:13; Lk. 23:56; Lk. 24:1; Acts 23:23.

**Make** (present imperative) (4160) [poieo](#) occurs 568 times, primarily in the Gospels and in a wide variety of contexts, which makes it difficult to do a simple word study. **BDAG** says **poieo** is "a **multivalent** term (possessing many meanings), often without pointed semantic (relating to meaning in language) significance, used in reference to a broad range of activity involving such matters as bringing something into being, bringing something to pass, or simply interacting in some way with a variety of entities." (**BDAG**) **Poieo** is primarily translated with the idea of to **DO** (to bring to pass, to carry out, to bring about, to accomplish), to **MAKE** (to construct or fashion something out of existing material) to **PERFORM**.

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### Luke 3:4 Prepared for His Presence -

Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. —Luke 3:4

Whenever the President of the United States visits a community, local officials cooperate with advance teams to prepare for his coming. His motorcade route is carefully laid out. Streets are repaired and litter is picked up. The offices, auditoriums, and businesses he'll visit are decorated. Those who will meet him put on their finest clothes. Everything possible is done to give him the kind of reception his high position deserves. If a world leader merits such thorough preparation, certainly the Lord of the universe deserves far more. John, the baptizer and "advance man" for Christ, urged the people to get ready for the Messiah. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-4, he called for the removal of spiritual obstacles (Luke 3:10-14).

1. Mountains of pride and abuse must be leveled.
2. Valleys of human need must be filled.
3. Crooked, immoral paths must be straightened.
4. Rough places of oppression must be made smooth.

Such actions do not save us, but they do reflect a timeless principle: If our hearts are prepared for the Lord, He will walk through the streets of our lives with power and peace.

I wonder, is there anything in our lives that makes us unprepared for His presence? By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Thought = Read James 4:6-10. How should we prepare ourselves if we desire to have a close relationship with God?

### **Repentance clears the way for our walk with God.**

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#### **Luke 3:4-5 The Ultimate Road Trip -**

Read: Isaiah 40:1–11

In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

Madagascar's National Road 5 offers the beauty of a white sand coastline, palm forests, and the Indian Ocean. Its 125 miles of two-track road, bare rock, sand, and mud, however, have given it a reputation for being one of the worst roads in the world. Tourists looking for breathtaking views are advised to have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, an experienced driver, and an onboard mechanic.

John the Baptist came to announce the good news of the coming Messiah to those traveling on rough roads and through barren landscape. Repeating the words of the prophet Isaiah written centuries earlier, he urged curious crowds to "prepare the way for the Lord" and to "make straight paths for him" (Luke 3:4–5; Isa. 40:3)

God, we need You to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves.

John knew that if the people of Jerusalem were going to be ready to welcome their long-awaited Messiah their hearts needed to change. Mountains of religious pride would need to come down. Those in the valley of despair because of their broken lives would need to be lifted up.

Neither could be done by human effort alone. Those who refused to respond to the Spirit of God by accepting John's baptism of repentance failed to recognize their Messiah when He came (Luke 7:29–30). Yet those who saw their need for change discovered in Jesus the goodness and wonder of God.

Father in heaven, we need You to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves. Please remove any mountain of pride or valley of despair that would keep us from welcoming You into our lives. Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### **Repentance clears the way for our walk with God.**

**INSIGHT:** This passage is not a message of hope only for exiled Jews. It is for us all. Isaiah is proclaiming a universal truth: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." For Jesus's followers, trouble, sorrow, and exile last only for a season. The hope of the Lord lasts forever.

#### **Luke 3:5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH**

- **Ravine:** Lu 1:51-53 Isa 2:11-17 35:6-8 40:4 49:11 61:1-3 Eze 17:24 Jas 1:9
- **Crooked:** Isa 42:16 45:2 Heb 12:12,13
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

### **HEARTS PREPARED FOR A KING**

'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED ([pleroo](#)), AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW ([tapeinoo](#)); THE CROOKED ([skolios](#)) WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH - The **literal** picture in this quote describes the physical work preparing the roads to make them fit for a king to travel over when he arrives. The figurative sense of this picture is that of internal moral and spiritual preparation (including repentance) for the coming Messiah. The idea is that as a kings would send a courier ahead of them to tell the people of their lands to prepare roads for their coming, so the Messiah sends his herald to

tell his people to prepare their hearts for his coming. However the **figurative** sense is for us to prepare our hearts to receive the King by dealing with sin and doing an honest inventory of our heart. We must see the depths of our sin before we can truly understand our need for a Savior.

Such actions do not save us, but they do reflect a timeless principle:

If our hearts are prepared for the Lord,

He will walk through the streets of our lives with power and peace.

-- Mart DeHaan

**NET Note** - The figurative language of this verse speaks of the whole creation preparing for the arrival of a major figure, so all obstacles to his approach are removed.

**A T Robertson** on the word for **ravine** - Here only in the N. T., though in the LXX and ancient Greek. It is a ravine or valley hedged in by precipices.

**ESV Study Bible** adds that the description of the images from Isaiah 40:3-4 "are also metaphors that have ethical overtones: the proud and arrogant will be humbled (Lk 1:52; 14:11; 18:14), the humble and lowly will be exalted, and the crooked (cf. Acts 2:40) will be changed." (Borrow the [ESV study Bible](#))

**John MacArthur** notes that "Chapter 40, the source of this prophecy, is a pivotal point in the book of Isaiah. The first thirty-nine chapters focus largely on God's coming judgments on Israel and the surrounding nations. The opening words of chapter 40, " 'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God," (Isa 40:1) mark a dramatic change in tone. The message of Isaiah's prophecy changed from judgment to salvation, which is the theme of the rest of the book. The same God who judged Israel for her sins will one day have mercy on her; His ultimate purpose for the nation is not judgment but the salvation of the **believing remnant**, based on His unmerited grace (cf. Ro 11:1-32). The theme of God's comforting of Israel runs throughout the last half of Isaiah's prophecy (cf. Isaiah 40:6-11, 28-31; 41:8-10, 13; 49:14-16; 51:1-3, 12; 52:9; 54:4-8; 57:18; 61:2; 66:12-13). Ultimately, God's comfort of Israel will culminate in the **millennial kingdom**. Human history will end when the Lord Jesus Christ establishes His earthly kingdom and reigns over the entire world (Ps. 2:6; Isa. 2:2; Jer. 33:15; Ezek. 34:23-24; Dan. 2:44-45; Hos. 3:5; Rev. 20:4-6). Politically, the **millennial kingdom** will be characterized by Christ's universal, absolute, and righteous rule. Physically, the curse will be lifted, resulting in abundant provision, health, and long life for all. Spiritually, knowledge of the Lord will be universal (Isa. 11:9), and the believing remnant of Israel will be saved (Zech 13:1, 8). (See [MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** goes on to apply the words of Isaiah to individuals - **Every ravine shall be filled up.**" That's analogous to the low things, the base things, the dark things of the heart. They have to be brought up, as it were, to the light. And then every **mountain and hill** is **brought low**. The high things of the heart, self-exaltation, self-will, self-fulfillment, all the pride has to be brought down. Then he talks about the **crooked** being made straight, the **skolios**, like scoliosis, curvature, anything perverse, twisted, deceitful, devious, lying, manipulating. All those matters straightened out. And then "the rough road smooth," any kind of hindrance, any kind of obstacle, anything that clutters a clear and smooth path, anything that obstructs the Lord's entrance into the heart; could be self-love, apathy, indifference, lust, unbelief, etc., etc. And John then would come and he would be the voice, he would be saying, you need to do a real search of your heart. You need to reflect on your personal sin. You need to see the depth and the dark and the low and gross and base elements of your life. You need to see the height and the high things and the proud things of your heart and the perverse and crooked things and every other hindrance in your life for what it is, obstacles that prevent the King from coming into your heart. True repentance requires a complete and full admission of one's sinfulness, depth and height and length and breadth. That's essential to real repentance. Sin must be recognized and reflected upon in one's own life. ([Luke 3:7-8 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 1](#))

**Marvin Vincent** on **every ravine...filled...every mountain...brought low** - In allusion to the practice of Eastern monarchs. On occasions of their progress, heralds were sent out to call on the people to clear and improve the old roads or to make new ones. "When Ibrahim Pacha proposed to visit certain places in Lebanon, the emirs and sheiks sent forth a general proclamation, somewhat in the style of Isaiah's exhortation, to all the inhabitants to assemble along the proposed route and prepare the way before him. The same was done in 1845, on a grand scale, when the Sultan visited Brusa. The stones were gathered out, the crooked places straightened, and rough ones made level and smooth. I had the benefit of these labors a few days after his majesty's visit. The exhortation 'to gather out the stones' (Isa. 62:10) is peculiarly appropriate. These farmers do the exact reverse—gather up the stones from their fields and cast them into the highway; and it is this barbarous custom which, in many places, renders the paths uncomfortable and even dangerous" (Thomson, "Land and Book").

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**Filled** (4137) **pleroo** means to make full, to fill, to **be filled** (**passive voice** = acted on by outside force = "**Divine Passive**") to the brim (a net, Mt 13:48, a building, Jn 12:3, Acts 2:2+, a city, Acts 5:28+, needs Phil 4:19+), to make complete in every particular, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, to flood, to diffuse throughout, to pervade, to take possession of and so to ultimately to

control.

**Pleroo in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 1:20; Lk. 2:40; Lk. 3:5; Lk. 4:21; Lk. 7:1; Lk. 9:31; Lk. 21:24; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 24:44; Acts 1:16; Acts 2:2; Acts 2:28; Acts 3:18; Acts 5:3; Acts 5:28; Acts 7:23; Acts 7:30; Acts 9:23; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:25; Acts 13:27; Acts 13:52; Acts 14:26; Acts 19:21; Acts 24:27;

**Will be brought low** (5013) (**tapeinoo** from **tapeinos** = low, not high, figuratively of one's attitude/social position) literally means to level, to cause something to be lower or to make low (eg, to level off a mountain as here in Lk 3:5 from Lxx of Is 40:4). **Tapeinoo** means to bow down, to make low, and figuratively to humble, to cause someone to lose prestige, to reduce to a meaner condition or lower rank, to abase.

**Tapeinoo** - 11x in NT - brought low(1), get along(1), humble(2), humble means(1), humbled(4), humbles(4), humbling(1), humiliate(1). Mt. 18:4; Mt. 23:12; Lk. 3:5; Lk. 14:11; Lk. 18:14; 2Co. 11:7; 2Co. 12:21; Phil. 2:8; Phil. 4:12; Jas 4:10; 1Pe 5:6

**Crooked** (4646) (**skolios**; English = **scoliosis** = an abnormal curvature and misalignment of the spine) describes something as literally crooked, bent, deformed or warped and stands opposed to that which is straight. Figuratively **skolios** refers to anything that deviates from a standard or norm, and in Scripture, it is often used of things that are morally or spiritually corrupt.

**Skolios** in NT - Lk. 3:5; Acts 2:40 = "Be saved from this **perverse** generation!"; Phil. 2:15 = "in the midst of a **crooked** and perverse generation"; 1 Pet. 2:18 = "also to those who are **unreasonable**."

**Straight** (2117) **euthus** when used as an **adjective** literally means straight or a straight line and figuratively to what is proper or right.

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**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening on Luke 3:4** - The voice crying in the wilderness demanded a way for the Lord, a way prepared, and a way prepared in the wilderness. I would be attentive to the Master's proclamation, and give him a road into my heart, cast up by gracious operations, through the desert of my nature. The four directions in the text must have my serious attention.

Every valley must be exalted. Low and grovelling thoughts of God must be given up; doubting and despairing must be removed; and self-seeking and carnal delights must be forsaken. Across these deep valleys a glorious causeway of grace must be raised.

Every mountain and hill shall be laid low. Proud creature-sufficiency, and boastful self-righteousness, must be levelled, to make a highway for the King of kings. Divine fellowship is never vouchsafed to haughty, highminded sinners. The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, and visits the contrite in heart, but the lofty are an abomination unto him. My soul, beseech the Holy Spirit to set thee right in this respect.

The crooked shall be made straight. The wavering heart must have a straight path of decision for God and holiness marked out for it. Double-minded men are strangers to the God of truth. My soul, take heed that thou be in all things honest and true, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.

The rough places shall be made smooth. Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briars of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when he comes to honour his favoured ones with his company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find in my heart a highway made ready by his grace, that he may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it.

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**Chuck Smith on application of "fixing the highways so the king could travel in comfort"**- The preparation was the inward preparation of the hearts of the people for the coming of their king. There is a necessary preparation to meet God. Some people are very cavalier concerning God. They make reference to Him in a very irreverent way.. The man upstairs.. The big daddy in the sky.. The Bible says "Holy and reverend is His name." The Jews have such respect for His name that they will not even seek to pronounce it. In their writing today, they will not even spell God, but will write G\_D. God is not your good buddy. He is holy, He is awesome, He is the Creator of the universe. He said, "Fear ye not Me, saith the Lord, will you not tremble at My presence?" The Psalmist said, "Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord." Again he said, "Let all the earth fear the Lord and stand in awe of Him. Under the law they were commanded to fear Jehovah Dt 6:2, 10:12, 13:4, etc. The people had not been obeying the Lord, they had not kept His statutes and commandments, they had not walked in His ways, to love and serve Him. Now He is coming to earth to walk among men, so the command goes forth from John to prepare ye the way of the Lord. Note that the command is personal. It is something that you must do. The prophet said, "Prepare to meet your God." Basically John was saying the King is on His way, prepare the way for Him. WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD? No man can stand before the Holy God in His sinful state without being consumed. Jesus was talking to the Pharisee's one day and He made reference to the verse



in Psalm 118 concerning the Stone that the builders rejected, had become the head of the corner, He then admonished them that whoever would fall on this Stone would be broken, but upon whomsoever It shall fall, It will grind him to powder. Jesus was saying that it is better to fall on Him, than to have Him fall on you. Cast yourself on Jesus Christ today, and you will be saved. Seek to resist Him and you will be ground to powder. Their hearts were not prepared for the visitation of the righteous King. I believe that the message of John was very relevant for his time. Josephus describes the social and moral conditions of that day. He speaks of the gangs that actually ruled the streets in Jerusalem, the disregard for the rights of others. You remember that Jesus gave the parable of the man on the Jericho road that was beset by the robbers, and how no one cared for his life. They were a me first generation. They could watch a crime being committed and not move to help the victim. I believe that Billy Graham has been sort of a modern day John the Baptist in that he has been addressing the moral and social conditions of the world today, and calling on the people to "Prepare the way for the Lord." **I believe that the King is on His way, that He will be coming very soon. Many of you are not prepared for His coming.** Should He come today for His church, many of you would be left to face the great tribulation. The moral conditions of the world today are much the same as they were at the time that John began his ministry. I cannot believe how relevant the message of John's is for this present time.

**HOW ARE WE TO PREPARE?** Make straight His paths. John sort of repeated this when he said, "Make the crooked paths straight." Some of you are doing things that are crooked. You have been cheating others.. You have been gaining through fraud and deceit. When the tax collectors asked John what they should do he told them not to exact more than was appointed them. You may seek to justify it in your mind, but you are a plain crook. **"Every valley shall be filled."** A valley is a depression in the surface of the landscape, these were to be filled. Much of our depression comes from selfishness. We are thinking too much about ourselves.. We need to be thinking more of others. Back in the days when we had Hi Y clubs on the campuses of our schools, we had to learn a poem called "others". I still remember that poem to the present day. "Lord help me live from day to day, In such a self forgetting way, That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for others. Help me in all the things I do, To ever be sincerely true, And know that the things I do, Must needs be done for others. Others Lord, yes others, Let this my motto be, Help me to live for others, That I may live for Thee."

**The hills were to brought low.** We often hear said of a person, "He thinks he is so high and mighty, you cannot even talk to him." Isaiah 2:12 "For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased." We are told to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. The soldiers asked John what they should do, and he told them to not accuse any man falsely. Do not misuse your authority.

**The rough places shall be made smooth.** Can you think of any rough places in your life? There is a lot of smoothing out to be done in each of us. Let us prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord, with King David let us pray, search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. ([Sermon Notes](#))

#### Luke 3:6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'

- Lu 2:10,11,30-32 Ps 98:2,3 Isa 40:5 49:6 52:10 Mk 16:15 Ro 10:12 Ro 10:18
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:1-6 Good News for Bad Times](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:4-6 A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

### THE SALVATION OF GOD

**AND ALL FLESH ([sarx](#)) WILL SEE THE SALVATION ([soterios](#)) OF GOD** - All flesh opens the offer of salvation to all men, both Jews and Gentiles alike, a truth alluded to by Simeon in Lk 2:30-32+ declaring "For my eyes have seen Your **salvation ([soterios](#))** , Which You have prepared in the presence of **all peoples**, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE **GENTILES**, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Here is the translation from the Hebrew text - Isaiah 40:5 - "Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, **And all flesh will see** [ /T ] together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Luke quotes from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 40:5 which adds the word **salvation ([soterion](#) "pasa sarx to soterion tou Theou")** where they add *soterion*) for "IT." **Cole** writes "**salvation** explains more specifically the way in which men will see God's glory, namely, through His saving work in Jesus Christ. God is glorified when people are reconciled to Him through the atonement Christ provided on the cross." ([Sermon](#))

**NET Note** - A quotation from Isa 40:5. Though all the synoptic gospels use this citation from Isaiah, only Luke cites the material of

Isa 40:5–6. His goal may well be to get to the declaration of Isa 40:6, where all humanity (i.e., all nations) see God's salvation (see also Luke 24:47)

What does it mean to **see the salvation of God**? This speaks of course of the Savior, Christ Jesus, through Whom salvation would be made possible for all men. Simeon (Lk 2:25+ when he took the infant Jesus in his arms - Lk 2:27-28+) has an excellent "commentary" on seeing **the salvation of God**..

For my eyes have seen Your salvation, Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel." (Lk 2:30-32+)

**I Howard Marshall** basically agrees writing "The Messianic salvation will appear in and with the coming of the Messiah [My]. What Simeon had seen in 2:30 would be seen by everyone." (Scroll to page 100 of [The Gospel of Luke](#))

**Bratcher** says "It means that they will see how God will save them or they will see the Savior that God will send them."

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**Flesh** (4561)([sarx](#)) in this context refers to flesh and blood mankind, humanity, human beings, men.

**Sarx in Luke's writings** - Lk. 3:6; Lk. 24:39; Acts 2:17 = "Mankind"; Acts 2:26 = "my flesh"; Acts 2:31 = "His flesh to suffer decay."

**Salvation** (4992) ([soterios/soterion](#) from [soter](#) = savior) is an adjective which refers to that which is pertains to the means of salvation = bringing salvation, delivering, rescuing. **Soterios** describes the act of delivering or saving from great danger or peril and of healing, protecting and preserving.

**Soterios** - 5x in NT - Lk. 2:30; Lk. 3:6; Acts 28:28; Eph. 6:17; Tit. 2:11

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**Steven Cole** makes 3 observations on **all flesh shall see the salvation of God**.

#### A. SALVATION IS FROM GOD.

"**The salvation of God**" means that God is the originator and provider of salvation. Luke has already used this particular word in 2:30, where Simeon holds the baby Jesus and proclaims, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." What we are saved from is our sin and the impending judgment of God because of our sin. Thus a key element in salvation is the forgiveness of sins (Lk 3:3; see Luke 1:77+). Since only God can forgive sins, and the Bible is clear that He does it only by His free grace, no man can save himself by earning it through any amount of good deeds or human merit or effort. Salvation comes totally from God who planned it before the foundation of the world, announced it through His prophets, and sent His messenger John and His Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great British preacher, [Charles Spurgeon](#), tells of the time, just months after his conversion at age 15, when it dawned on him that his salvation was totally from God. He was sitting in church when, he says (*Autobiography* [Banner of Truth], 1:165),

The thought struck me, "How did you come to be a Christian?" I sought the Lord. "But how did you come to seek the Lord?" The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to *make me* seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, *How came I to pray?* I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. *How came I to read the Scriptures?* I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, ... and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."

Writing to his father about this experience, he said, "I trust that I feel sufficiently the corruption of my own heart to know that, instead of doing one iota to forward my own salvation, my old corrupt heart would impede it, were it not that my Redeemer is mighty, and works as He pleases" (*ibid.*, p. 115).

Salvation by man's efforts or merits does not have the power to change the corrupt human heart. But God is mighty to save. The only message that will bring relief to this evil world is the message that salvation is from the Lord.

#### B. SALVATION REQUIRES FACING THE BAD NEWS ABOUT YOURSELF, THAT YOU ARE A SINNER, ALIENATED FROM THE HOLY GOD.

"**John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**" God's message to a lost and hurting world begins with the issue of sin. Jesus taught that when the Holy Spirit came, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Until people are brought before God in His holiness and wrath against all sin, they do not realize their desperate situation. They justify themselves by comparing themselves with others, and they think that God will be tolerant on the day of

judgment. So they assume that all will be okay on that day.

In a great section in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* ([Westminster Press], 3.12.1), John Calvin argues that we can never be justified before God by our own good works. He points out that before we compare ourselves with one another and so acquit ourselves, we need to remember that we will one day stand, not before a human court, but before God's heavenly court. He asks:

How shall we reply to the Heavenly Judge when he calls us to account? Let us envisage for ourselves that Judge, not as our minds naturally imagine him, but as he is depicted for us in Scripture: by whose brightness the stars are darkened [Job 3:9]; by whose strength the mountains are melted; by whose wrath the earth is shaken [cf. Job 9:5-6]; whose wisdom catches the wise in their craftiness [Job examine the deeds of men: Who will stand confident before his throne?

Luke's quote from Isaiah 40:3-5 shows us in figurative language the problem that sinful human hearts have in receiving the King of kings and His salvation. Isaiah pictures the scene when a king announced that he would visit a remote village. The rocky, twisted, up-and-down mountain trail was good enough for the villagers, but it was not suitable for the king. The village needed to get a road crew out there to straighten out the path, to fill in the ravines and level the mountains in the way, to remove the rocks and fill in the potholes, so that the king had a smooth, straight road for his arrival.

It's a spiritual picture. If we just have to do with one another, we can tolerate the twisted, rocky, potholed ways of our heart. But if the King of Glory is coming, we're in big trouble! Our hearts are full of ravines of sin and impurity. There are mountains of pride and self-righteousness in the way. We walk the crooked paths of deceit and falsehood. There are the rough, rocky, and potholed roads of greed, jealousy, self-will, blame, and disobedience. The King doesn't travel on those kinds of roads!

Don't misapply the analogy. It is not teaching that you must remove every trace of sin and corruption before you can receive the King into your life. That would be impossible! But the Holy Spirit must convict you of the awful sinfulness of your heart, so that you recognize your desperate need for God's salvation. You must face the bad news about yourself as a sinner before you can welcome God's gracious salvation.

### **C. SALVATION PROMISES THE GOOD NEWS, THAT IF YOU WILL REPENT AND BELIEVE IN CHRIST, GOD WILL FORGIVE ALL YOUR SINS.**

Repentance and faith are often linked in Scripture and are the flip sides of the same coin. *Repentance* has the main idea of turning (Luke 1:16, 17+) or changing one's thinking and behavior. It involves recognizing our sin and alienation from God so that, rather than continuing in the same direction of self-will and disobedience, we turn back to God and appeal to His mercy. *Faith* is the hand that receives God's mercy or grace. Faith lays hold of Jesus Christ as the perfect Substitute who died for our sins. *Forgiveness* means that God releases us from the penalty of our sins because His Son Jesus bore that penalty for us, and we are trusting in Him. Thus in summarizing the gospel message to the disciples after the resurrection, Jesus said, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47+).

Repentance and faith are not something you must do to earn salvation. The shed blood of Christ merited salvation for every sinner who will lay hold of Him. Repentance and faith are God's gracious gifts that enable us to receive His mercy. J. C. Ryle explains,

There is nothing meritorious in this. It forms no part whatever of the price of our redemption. Our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. But the great fact still remains, that saved souls are always penitent souls, and that saving faith in Christ, and true repentance toward God, are never found asunder ([\*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels\*](#)).

The Scriptures instruct the person who has repented and believed in Jesus Christ to confess that faith in water baptism. John's baptism was a unique rite that pointed people ahead to the promised Messiah. It pictured God's washing or purification from sins, but it was not complete apart from what Messiah would do in offering Himself as the Lamb of God, the perfect sin-bearer. That is why, when Paul later found some disciples of John in Ephesus, who did not know about Jesus Christ, when they believed he baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-6).

For those who have believed in Christ, baptism is a public confession that symbolizes what Jesus Christ has done spiritually for the one who has believed. He has washed us from all of our sins and He has identified us totally with His death, burial, and resurrection to new life. Since the word "baptism" means dipping, and since going completely under the water best pictures what baptism means, immersion is the best mode of baptism. If you look up every occurrence of "baptism" in the New Testament, you will find that it always has reference to believers, and never to infants who cannot yet believe. If you have believed in Christ and know that He has forgiven your sins by His grace, you should be baptized in obedience to His command (Mt. 28:19+).

**Conclusion** - In the early 18th century, England was infected with a plague of materialism. The gap between the rich and poor was

widening, but moral degeneracy marked every level of society. The Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, led an openly immoral life and often made fun of virtue. Moral laxity pervaded the nation. Drunkenness, gambling, and cruel amusements were an obsession. Crime was rampant, and criminal law was unfair and barbarous, making criminals only more desperate. The Church of England had, for the most part, ceased to be a vital force. Many ridiculed and railed at the Christian faith without reserve (these conditions summarized from A. Skevington Wood, [The Inextinguishable Blaze: Spiritual Renewal and Advance in the Eighteenth Century - Advance of Christianity Through the Centuries](#) [Eerdmans], pp. 9-16).

God broke into this dismal and seemingly hopeless situation by saving a young man, [George Whitefield](#), who had been raised in his mother's inn and tavern. His friends, [John Wesley](#) and [Charles Wesley](#), also were saved out of their legalistic religion to a living faith in the Redeemer. Through these men, the good news of God's salvation spread to that decadent society and saved it from the brink of anarchy and revolution. In his biography of Whitefield, Arnold Dallimore observes ([George Whitefield](#) [Cornerstone Books], 1:25),

We shall need to remember that it was among a people broken by gin that Whitefield and the Wesleys went about in the nobility of their ministries and that there was triumphant meaning to Charles Wesley's lines on the deliverance effected by the Gospel:

Hear Him, ye deaf! His praise ye dumb,  
Your loosened tongues employ;  
Ye blind, behold your Savior come,  
And leap ye lame for joy!

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free!  
His blood can make the foulest clean,  
His blood availed for me!

That same liberating, powerful message is what we need for our dismal, spiritually dark times. Let's believe it, live it, proclaim it, and pray that God would break through in our day with His powerful Word of salvation! ([Good News for Bad Times Luke 3:1-6](#))

**Luke 3:7 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**

NET Luke 3:7 So John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

GNT Luke 3:7 λεγεν ο ν το ς κπορευομ νοις χλοις βαππισθ ναι π α το , Γενν ματα χιδν ν, τ ς π δειξεν μ ν φυγε ν π τ ς μελλο σης ργ ς;

NLT Luke 3:7 When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming wrath?"

KJV Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

ESV Luke 3:7 He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

NIV Luke 3:7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

ASV Luke 3:7 He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

CSB Luke 3:7 He then said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

NKJ Luke 3:7 Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

NRS Luke 3:7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

YLT Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitudes coming forth to be baptised by him, 'Brood of vipers! who did prompt you to flee from the coming wrath?'

NAB Luke 3:7 He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

NJB Luke 3:7 He said, therefore, to the crowds who came to be baptised by him, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution?'

GWN Luke 3:7 Crowds of people were coming to be baptized by John. He would say to them, "You poisonous snakes! Who showed you how to flee from God's coming anger?"

BBE Luke 3:7 So he said to the people who went out to him for baptism: You offspring of snakes, at whose word are you going in flight from the wrath to come?

- **Brood:** Ge 3:15 Ps 58:4,5 Isa 59:5 Mt 3:7-10 23:33 Joh 8:44 Ac 13:10 1Jn 3:8
- **Flee:** 1Th 1:10 Heb 6:18
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:7-8 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 1](#) - John MacArthur

**Related Passages:** Matthew and Mark record a parallel [pericope](#) account of John's scathing denunciation of hypocritical seekers given a somber warning...

Matt. 3:7-12+ 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** ([aorist imperative](#)) 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 (cf. John 8:37-40). 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. 11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize ([baptizo](#)) you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Mk 1:7-8+ And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize ([baptizo](#)) you with the Holy Spirit."

## **JOHN BEGINS WITH WARNING CONCERNING THE WRATH OF GOD**

**Steven Cole** is correct when he notes that "The theme of 3:7-9 is clearly that of warning." Luke 3:7-20 focuses on the preaching of John and his proclamation of "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 3:3). The essence of John's message was to call the people to genuine repentance (**ED:** See [Bock's note](#)). ([False and True Repentance](#))

**So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized**([baptizo](#)) **by him** - Why did John attract crowds, for after all this was not Carnegie Hall but a dry desert wilderness? As Matthew says in his Gospel the people "**all regard John as a prophet.**" (Mt 21:26) Keeping in mind that Israel had been without a prophet since Malachi's prophecy 400 years earlier, undoubtedly many of the Jews were responding because they knew that a prophet now come with a word from God (cf Lk 3:2+). Who wouldn't want to hear a man with a message from God? Little did they know that this message would be a call to repent from their sins! So what follows in Lk 3:7-17 is a sampling of John's powerful "in your face" preaching, crying out day after day, as crowds came to hear him. Luke then says "So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people." (Lk 3:18+). And so we see John the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah Who would arrive on the scene in 6 months or less.

This is actually the first of 4 warnings in this section. In context they are warnings to beware of false repentance. (See Lk 3:7, Lk 3:9, Lk 3:16, Lk 3:17).

**John MacArthur** notes that "John's message stands in sharp contrast to the "cheap grace" and "easy-believism" that characterizes much watered-down contemporary preaching. Such deficient preaching strips the gospel of its warning that sinners have violated God's law and face His wrath and judgment in eternal hell unless they repent. The predictable result of a shallow, superficial gospel presentation devoid of a biblical call to repentance is a shallow, superficial, non-saving response. As a result, churches are filled with many who profess to know Jesus Christ, but since they have never repented the Lord will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23). Although they imagine themselves to be on the narrow way that leads to

eternal life, they are in reality on the broad way that leads to eternal destruction (Mt 7:13–14; cf. 25:12; Acts 8:13, 18–23; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:16)." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**J C Ryle** addresses John's popularity in Israel and how great were the effects of his ministry at least for a time in the nation of Israel.

We are told that, "People from Jerusalem and from all over Judea traveled out into the wilderness to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River." The fact here recorded is one that is much overlooked. We are apt to lose sight of him who went before the face of our Lord, and to see nothing but the Lord Himself. We forget the morning star in the full blaze of the Sun. And yet it is clear that John's preaching arrested the attention of the whole Jewish people, and created an excitement all over Palestine. It aroused the nation from its slumbers, and prepared it for the ministry of our Lord, when He appeared. Jesus Himself says, "He was a burning and a shining light--you were willing to rejoice for a season in his light." (John 5:35.) We ought to remark here how little dependence is to be placed on what is called "popularity." If ever there was one who was a popular minister for a season, John the Baptist was that man. **Yet of all the crowds who came to his baptism, and heard his preaching, how few, it may be feared, were converted!** Some, we may hope, like **Andrew**, were guided by John to Christ. **But the vast majority, in all probability, died in their sins.** Let us remember this whenever we see a crowded church. A great congregation no doubt is a pleasing sight. But the thought should often come across our minds, "How many of these people will reach heaven at last?" It is not enough to hear and admire popular preachers. It is no proof of our conversion that we always worship in a place where there is a crowd. Let us take care that we hear the voice of Christ Himself, and follow Him. ([Commentary](#))

**You brood ([gennema](#)) of vipers ([echidna](#))** - I like some of the other renderings - **GWN** = "You poisonous snakes!", **BBE** = "You offspring of snakes." **NET** = "You offspring of vipers." Was John applying this strong description to everyone in the **crowds** coming out (see [note below](#) by MacArthur)? Perhaps he was for in a sense they were "offspring" of poisonous teaching of the religious leaders, but in Matthew 3:7 he specifically addresses "**the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism**," calling them a "brood of vipers." **Spurgeon** asks "Does not John the Baptist speak like Elijah? Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear. The prophet of the wilderness talks like one who is all on fire with zeal for God, and indignation against evil." Neither the messages of John the Baptist nor of Jesus had any positive effect on the Pharisees and Sadducees (did not make the "crooked...straight" or the "rough roads smooth." Lk 3:5) but served only to harden their hearts and stiffen their unbelief and their opposition to the Good News and to God's righteous messengers, both of whom they eventually killed. Beloved, times have not changed, so do not be surprised when hearts become hardened and necks stiffened as they hear you proclaim the Gospel! You are in good company with John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ (cf 1 Th 1:6+) "John sensed that their reason for coming to him was just their safety, not genuine repentance. Righteous behavior would demonstrate true repentance." (Constable)

**J C Ryle** on **you brood ([gennema](#)) of vipers** - We should first mark **the holy boldness with which John addresses the multitudes who came to his baptism.** He speaks to them as "a generation of vipers." He saw the rottenness and hypocrisy of the profession that the crowd around him were making, and uses language descriptive of their case. His head was not turned by popularity. He cared not who was offended by his words. The spiritual disease of those before him was desperate, and of long standing, and he knew that desperate diseases need strong remedies. Well would it be for the Church of Christ, if it possessed more plain-speaking ministers, like John the Baptist, in these latter days. A morbid dislike to strong language — an excessive fear of giving offence — a constant flinching from directness and plain speaking, are, unhappily, too much the characteristics of the modern Christian pulpit. Uncharitable language is no doubt always to be deprecated. But there is no charity in flattering unconverted people, by abstaining from any mention of their vices, or in applying smooth epithets to damnable sins. There are two texts which are too much forgotten by Christian preachers. In one it is written, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." In the other it is written, "Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant." (Luke 6:26; Gal. 1:10.)

**You brood ([gennema](#)) of vipers ([echidna](#) - "slithering snakes")** would not make John a good pastoral candidate at a "seeker friendly" church! He was not catering to those with "itching ears," merely teaching what people would like to hear (2 Ti 4:3+). The first **serpent** was Satan (Ge 3:1+, Rev 12:9+) and clearly the implication is that he was their father even as Jesus had declared to the Jews (who were false professors of faith in Jesus - Jn 8:30) in John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

**MacArthur** adds that the **crowd coming to be baptized** "were the children of Satan (cf Jn 8:44). He is pointing out their superficiality. He says, your repentance is superficial because your true nature is vicious, your true nature is of the serpent, your true nature is poisonous, your true nature is hostile, your true nature is deadly, particularly the Pharisees and Sadducees who paraded

themselves as if they represented God and they were just biting the people and filling them with poison (Mt 3:7+)....He is saying to them, it doesn't do you any good to scramble around like snakes in front of a brush fire if you don't change your nature. Who told you you could escape the wrath by just coming down here and getting baptized?" ([True Repentance](#)).

**Who warned you to flee ([pheugo](#)) from the wrath to come** - These men did not want the Messiah. They wanted a "fire insurance policy" or a "free ticket" (instead of an "all day pass" they wanted an "all eternity pass!") granting entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven! What a picture John presents -- what happens when there is a fire in the desert? The snakes flee from the heat of the fire. God's coming **wrath** would be far worse, beginning being cast into [Hades](#) (a "place of torment" Lk 16:28+), and ending with Hades being thrown into the **Lake of fire and brimstone** (Rev 20:15+), where "they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev 20:10+), Whether this is literal or figurative fire, the effect is to produce eternal torment. John emphasizes this coming **wrath** of God, a truth which should stir a fear in every human heart and in turn motivate a desire for genuine repentance.

**MacArthur** - The Jews hoped to gain right standing before God through their own self-righteous achievements. Keeping the Sabbath, celebrating the annual feasts, offering formal prayers, giving alms to the poor, and observing the law (at least externally), was the essence of their religion. Thus it was natural for them to see John's baptism as just another ritual to perform. But that legalistic, external approach was antithetical to true repentance, and John boldly confronted them. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**The wrath ([orge](#)) to come** - Literally "the ([present tense](#) - continually) coming wrath." This is God's righteous judgment coming upon this sinful orb and described in vivid detail in Revelation 6-19+ and the Great White Throne judgment in Rev 20:11-15+. Ps 2:12 says "His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Have you hidden with Christ in God by grace through faith? Col 3:3+) The [present tense](#) is used in a [proleptic](#) sense for so certain is the wrath of God to come to pass in the future. This phrase is reminiscent of Romans 1:18+ where Paul writes that "**For the wrath ([orge](#)) of God is ([present tense](#) - continually being) revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who (CONTINUALLY, ACTIVELY, WILLFULLY) suppress the truth in unrighteousness.**"

When God's **wrath** comes there will be no place for "vipers" to hide, no place for sinners to slide! (cf Rev 6:15-17+, Hos 10:8) The only solution is to "hide" NOW in Christ (Col 3:3+, cf 2 Cor 6:2+), believing in His gracious deliverance from so great a wrath to come by **so great a salvation** (Heb 2:3+). Considering the fact that Jerusalem would be destroyed some 40 years later, John's one might think John's warning was to the coming destruction in A D 70. However in the context of his call to repentance and forgiveness the wrath to which John refers is the final wrath of God when those whose name is not found written in the [Book of Life](#) are thrown into the [Lake of Fire](#). (cf Rev 20:10+ and Rev 20:11-15+) For the Jews another aspect of God's wrath is the coming **time of Jacob's trouble** (Jer 30:7+), at the end of this present age, in the last 3.5 year horrible period which is also known as the [Great Tribulation](#) and in which 2/3's of the Jews will perish (Hitler only killed 1/3 of the world's Jewish population).

**THOUGHT** - The indescribable horror of the righteous wrath of God which is coming to all mankind who remain dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) should motivate us who are saved from that wrath to boldly, continually throw out the Gospel life line to those who are perishing. And we can certainly pray for their salvation! I routinely pray for a hidden people group using the [Joshua Project's daily reminder](#) and find myself literally overwhelmed by the statistics on many days where the people group is described as having several million eternal souls and NOT A SINGLE BELIEVER is known in all of those millions. This should break our hearts and stimulate us to plead with God for these otherwise eternally doomed souls! If you need some additional motivation, take some time to study some of the **Related Resources** below on eternal punishment.

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**J C Ryle** discusses **the wrath to come** and the **subject of HELL** - We should mark how plainly John speaks to his hearers **about HELL and danger**. He tells them that there is a "**wrath to come**." He speaks of "**the axe**" of God's judgments, and of unfruitful trees being **thrown into the fire**."(Lk 3:9+) **The subject of HELL is always offensive to human nature**. The minister who dwells much upon it, must expect to find himself regarded as barbaric, violent, unfeeling, and narrow-minded. Men love to hear "smooth things," and to be told of peace, and not of danger. ("Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions." - Isaiah. 30:10.) But the subject is one that ought not to be kept back, if we desire to do good to souls. It is one that our Lord Jesus Christ brought forward frequently in His public teachings. That loving Savior, Who spoke so graciously of the way to heaven (Jn 14:6), has also used the plainest language about the way to HELL. Let us beware of being wise above that which is written, and more charitable than Scripture itself. Let the language of John the Baptist be deeply engraved in our hearts. Let us never be ashamed to avow our firm belief, that there is a "**wrath to come**" for the impenitent, and that it is possible for a man to be lost as well as to be saved. **To be silent on the subject is dreadful treachery to men's souls**. It only encourages them to persevere in wickedness, and fosters in their minds the devil's old delusion, "You shall not surely die." (Ge 3:4+) That minister is surely our best friend who tells us honestly of danger, and warns us, like John the Baptist, to "**flee from the wrath to come**." **Never will a man flee until he sees there is real cause to be afraid. Never will he seek heaven until he is convinced that there is risk of his falling into HELL. The religion in which there is no mention of HELL, is not the religion of John the Baptist, and of our Lord Jesus, and His apostles.**

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**Baptized** (907) **baptizo** from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. A study of the 77 NT uses (See below) reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism.

The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. **Baptizo** was used of the act of sinking ships. **Baptizo** also meant to bathe of a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged and then stranded on the shore.

Figuratively, **baptizo** pictures the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. In this sense **baptizo** means to be identified with.

The **baptism of John the Baptist** was for repentance and was associated with a genuine belief in Jesus (Acts 19:4+) and thus these Jews who were being baptized by John (eg, Mt 3:6+, Mk 1:4, 5+, Contrast Lk 7:29+ = saved with Lk 7:30+ = unsaved) were genuinely "saved". Note that it was not the fact that John baptized them in water that they were saved but their salvation was based on repentance and belief in Jesus. See [What was the meaning and importance of the baptism of John the Baptist?](#)

**Baptizo** in Luke and Acts - Lk. 3:7; Lk. 3:12; Lk. 3:16; Lk. 3:21; Lk. 7:29; Lk. 7:30; Lk. 11:38; Lk. 12:50; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:13; Acts 8:16; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47; Acts 10:48; Acts 11:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:3; Acts 19:4; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16;

**ILLUSTRATION** - **James Montgomery Boice** helps understand this figurative meaning of **baptizo** writing that "The clearest example that shows the meaning of **baptizo** is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be '**dipped**' (**bapto**) into boiling water and then '**baptised**' (**baptizo**) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of **baptizing** the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to **our union** and **identification** with Christ than to our water baptism... mere intellectual assent is not enough. **There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!**" (Bolding added)

**Brood** (KJV - "generation")(1081)(**gennema** from **gennáo** = to give birth to, beget, involving generation from **gínomai** = to become) is the product of the activity expressed by **gennao** and thus means that which is born or produced. **Friberg** on **gennema** - what is produced or born; of man offspring, child; plural, of vipers brood; used metaphorically of a kind or class of person, ungodly and rebellious toward God (Mt 12:34).

Strong's Dictionary does not make the distinction between **génnuma** (1081), offspring, and **génnuma**, fruit, produce, which results in great confusion. **Genema** means product, fruit, yield of plants literally in Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 12:18; 22:18 and figuratively the fruit of giving generous giving (2 Cor 9:10).

The phrase **You brood of vipers** occurs 4 times in the NT (ALL THE USES OF GENNEMA), here at the beginning of his ministry by John and 3 more times in Matthew once by John and 2 times at the end of Jesus' ministry..

Matthew 3:7+ (John) 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?

Matthew 12:34 (Jesus) **"You brood of vipers**, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

Matthew 23:33 (Jesus) "You serpents, **you brood of vipers**, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"

**Vipers** (2191)(**echidna**) was an adder or other poisonous snake. Four times **echidna** is used as a figurative description of the Pharisees (and all the crowd in Lk 3:7!) and once of a literal viper (Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Lk. 3:7; Acts 28:3. No uses in Lxx) **Echidna** referred to small poisonous snakes that lived primarily in the desert regions of Palestine and other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Because they looked like a dried twig when they were still, a person collecting wood for a fire would often pick one up inadvertently and be bitten, as happened to Paul on the island of Malta. That particular viper was deadly, and when Paul suffered no harm from the bite, the superstitious islanders thought he was a god (Acts 28:3, 6). **Vipers** therefore had the understandable reputation for being both deadly and deceitful. "Vipers (e.g., the Nicander's viper) were commonly believed to eat their way out of their mother's womb; thus John's calling the crowd "viper's offspring" was even nastier than calling them "**vipers**." Serpents would flee a burning field." (Bible Background Commentary) **ESV note** adds that **viper** was "A general term for any of a number of



poisonous snakes in Israel, showing that the people had become the seed of the Serpent (Ge 3:15-+)."

Echidna - Matt. 3:7; Matt. 12:34; Matt. 23:33; Lk. 3:7; Acts 28:3

**Warned** (5263) (**hupodeiknumi** from **hupo** = under + **deiknumi** = to show) properly to show by placing under (i.e. before) the eyes. Other writings give hupo in this compound the force of **'privily'** thus giving the literal sense to show secretly, to give a glimpse of and so to intimate or to suggest. The word implies a private or confidential hint or reminder. Figuratively (with the dative of person) it means to show or to make known or to point out (Lk 6:47; Acts 9:16). Here in Lk 3:7 it is used in the negative sense meaning to warn. (See another study of [hupodeiknumi](#)).

**Robertson** - The verb is like our "suggest" by proof to eye, ear, or brain (Luke 6:47; 12:5; Acts 9:16; 20:35; Matt. 3:7).

**Thayer** adds "to show by words and arguments, i. e. to teach (Lxx 2 Chr. 15:3) (A. V. frequently, to warn): tini (someone), followed by an infinitive of the thing, Mt. 3:7; Lk 3:7; to teach by the use of a figure, tini, followed by indirect discourse, Lk 6:47; 12:5; to show or teach by one's example, followed by hoti, Acts 20:35; to allow i.e. make known (future things), followed by indirect discourse Acts 9:16."

**BDAG** - (1) to direct someone's attention to something (as she pointed in the wrong direction. Also of visions granted martyrs to whom the Lord has shown the eternal blessings that no earthly eye can behold, pass. MPol 2:3) (2) to give instruction or moral direction

**Liddell-Scott** - to shew secretly, Hdt.; having given a glimpse of happiness, to make a shew of virtue, Thuc. 2. absol. to indicate one's will, Xen. II. to shew by tracing out, mark out, Hdt.: absol. to set a pattern, Xen. 2. generally, to teach indirectly or by indication, Isocr.

**Gilbrant - Classical Greek** - This verb is composed of the preposition **hupo**, "under," and **deiknumi**, "show, make known, explain, prove." Classical Greek writings reveal numerous examples of the use of this word: to show by tracing out, to set a pattern or example, to teach, to indicate, to give a glimpse of, to indicate one's will, intimate, lay out information, report, bring to the notice of, produce evidence, etc. (see Liddell-Scott and Moulton-Milligan). **Septuagint Usage** - In Esther the verb indicates Queen Esther had kept her nationality secret (Esther 2:10,20); she did not reveal it. The queen's uncle, Mordecai, made known that he resisted the king's command because he was a Jew. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Hupodeiknumi** - 6x in 6v - Usage: show(2), showed(1), warn(1), warned(2).

Matthew 3:7+ 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?"

Luke 3:7 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?"

Luke 6:47+ "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, **I will show** you whom he is like:

Luke 12:5+ "But **I will warn** you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

Acts 9:16+ for **I will show** him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Acts 20:35+ "In everything **I showed** you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**Hupodeiknumi** - 24x in 23v in the Septuagint - 1 Chr. 28:18; 2 Chr. 15:3; 2 Chr. 20:2; Est. 1:1; Est. 2:10; Est. 2:20; Est. 3:4; Est. 4:7; Est. 5:11; Est. 8:1; Jer. 31:19; Dan. 2:17; Dan. 4:1; Dan. 4:8; Dan. 5:7; Dan. 5:9; Dan. 5:12; Dan. 5:16; Dan. 9:22; Dan. 9:23; Dan. 10:14; Dan. 10:21; Dan. 11:2

**Flee** (escape) (5343) **pheugo** means to flee away in the sense of to take to flight in order to seek safety. To flee in the sense of to escape something, being made safe from danger by eluding or avoiding it (He 11:34+, Mt 3:7, Acts 27:30). To flee in the sense of to avoid, shun (Webster = to avoid deliberately and especially habitually), have nothing to do with (1Co 6:18). To vanish or disappear (Rev 16:20+, Rev 20:11+).

**Webster** defines **flee** as to run away often from danger or evil or to hurry toward a place of security. **Pheugo** is the root of our English word **"fugitive"** defined as one who escapes from something or someone.

**Pheugo** in Luke and Acts - Lk. 3:7; Lk. 8:34; Lk. 21:21; Acts 7:29; Acts 27:30;

**Wrath** ([3709](#)) (**orge** from **orgaô** = to teem, to swell) conveys the picture of a swelling which eventually bursts, and thus describes an anger that proceeds from God's nature and His opposition to sin and evil. **Orge** is not uncontrollable anger as when we "fly into a fit of anger," (which is described by **thumos**) but to God's settled indignation and controlled passionate hostile feeling toward sin in all its various manifestations. **Settled indignation** means that God's holiness cannot and will not coexist with sin in any form whatsoever. **Orge** is used primarily of God's holy, righteous wrath but occasionally refers to the **wrath** of men (see Ephesians 4:31<sub>±</sub>)

**Orge** refers to to an inner, deep resentment that seethes and smolders. **Orge** as used of God refers to His constant and controlled indignation toward sin, while **thumos** (which originally referred to violent movements of air, water, etc., and consequently came to mean "well up" or "boil up") refers more to a passionate outburst of rage. **Thumos** type anger represents an agitated, violent anger that rushes forth relentlessly. The root meaning has to do with moving rapidly and was used of a man's breathing violently while pursuing an enemy in great rage! **Orge** is God's settled opposition to and displeasure with sin. In short, God's wrath is his holy hatred of all that is unholy, His righteous indignation at everything that is unrighteous.

Orge - 34x - Matt. 3:7; Mk. 3:5; Lk. 3:7; Lk. 21:23; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 2:5; Rom. 2:8; Rom. 3:5; Rom. 4:15; Rom. 5:9; Rom. 9:22; Rom. 12:19; Rom. 13:4; Rom. 13:5; Eph. 2:3; Eph. 4:31; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; Col. 3:8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 3:11; Heb. 4:3; Jas. 1:19; Jas. 1:20; Rev. 6:16; Rev. 6:17; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 14:10; Rev. 16:19; Rev. 19:15

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#### Related Resources:

- [Eternal Punishment - on site in depth study](#)
- [Does hell exist?](#)
- [Where is hell? What is the location of hell?](#)
- [Is hell real? Is hell eternal?](#)
- [What does hell look like? How hot is hell?](#)
- [How can I not go to hell?](#)
- [Is Satan the master of hell? Do Satan and his demons punish people in hell?](#)
- [Who will go to hell?](#)
- [Is hell literally a place of fire and brimstone?](#)
- [Did God create hell?](#)
- [Are there different levels of punishment in hell?](#)
- [How can a loving God send someone to hell?](#)
- [What kind of bodies will people have in hell?](#)
- [Do Jews believe in hell?](#)
- [When was hell created?](#)
- [Why does God send people to hell?](#)
- [Questions about Heaven, Hell, and Eternity](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees as a brood of vipers?](#)

**ANSWER** - [John the Baptist](#) condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees as a "brood of vipers" in Matthew 3:7. A "brood of vipers" is a "family of snakes." Because vipers are venomous, John was essentially calling the religious leaders "deadly sons of serpents." It's quite a bold denunciation—and one Jesus repeated to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:34.

The [Pharisees and Sadducees](#) were the religious leaders in Israel during the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. The Pharisees were the Law-keepers and promoters of tradition, and the Sadducees comprised the wealthier ruling class. Over the centuries, these well-meaning groups had become corrupt, legalistic, and hypocritical and would eventually be responsible for crucifying the Son of God. They earned their label "brood of vipers," a sobriquet with deeper meaning than is obvious at first glance.

The viper was seen to be an evil creature. Its venom was deadly, and it was also devious—the viper that bit Paul was hiding in the firewood (Acts 28:3). The Hebrew Scriptures, which the Pharisees knew well, associate the serpent with Satan in Genesis 3. For John to call the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" implies that they bore satanic qualities. This idea is clearly stated by Jesus in John 8:44, where He says the unbelieving Jews "belong to [their] father, the devil." When John and Jesus called the Pharisees a "brood of vipers," they were pointing out that these men were deceitful, dangerous, and wicked—deceitful in that they were hypocrites (Matthew 23:15); dangerous in that they were blind leaders of the blind (Matthew 15:14); and wicked in that their hearts were full of murder (John 8:37).

Another fascinating detail is found in Jesus' use of the epithet "brood of vipers" to describe the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:33, He says, "You brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" Farmers, then as now, often burned the stubble of their fields to get the land ready for the next planting season. As the fires neared the vipers' dens, the snakes would slither away from the flames, but they often did not escape being consumed. Snakes fleeing the fire was a common sight, and Jesus' words to the Pharisees would likely have called it to their minds. How could they think they would escape the fire of God's judgment by relying on their own works, which were not at all honest or good? John's and Jesus' calling them a brood of vipers was meant to make them aware of their own wickedness and call them to repent. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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### Luke 3:7-14 The Gift of Giving -

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion. 2  
Corinthians 9:7

A pastor breathed life into the phrase "He'd give you the shirt off his back" when he gave this unsettling challenge to his church: "What would happen if we took the coats off our backs and gave them to the needy?" Then he took his own coat and laid it at the front of the church. Dozens of others followed his example. This was during the winter, so the trip home was less comfortable that day. But for dozens of people in need, the season warmed up just a bit.

When John the Baptist roamed the Judean wilderness, he had a stern warning for the crowd that came to hear him. "You brood of vipers!" he said. "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:7-8). Startled, they asked him, "What should we do then?" He responded with this advice: "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same" (vv. 10-11). True repentance produces a generous heart.

Lord, show us what we have that we might use to bless someone else today.

Because "God loves a person who gives cheerfully" (nlt), giving should never be guilt-based or pressured (2 Cor. 9:7). But when we give freely and generously, we find that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive.

Lord, thank You for the many ways You bless us. Forgive us for so often taking Your goodness for granted. Show us what we have that we might use to bless someone else today.

Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25

**INSIGHT:** God reveals His compassion for the poor throughout the Scriptures. In Psalm 72:13, we read, "He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death." The people were to join with God in bringing His compassion to the poor. In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly expresses the Father's concern for the poor by portraying them as accepted by the Father (Mark 12:42; Luke 16:20) and stating that His messianic mission, in part, was confirmed by His ministry to the poor (Matt. 11:4-5). Paul picks up the baton of this challenge by commending the churches of Macedonia and Achaia for their financial support of the poor in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26), while James warns that the poor must not be disregarded because of their socioeconomic status (James 2:2-6).

If our God and His Son are this concerned for the poor, how can we represent that love by caring for those in need?

By Tim Gustafson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Luke 3:8 "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.**

- **Fruits:** Isa 1:16-18 Eze 18:27-31 Ac 26:20 2Co 7:10,11 Ga 5:22-24 Php 1:11 Heb 6:7,8
- **We:** Lu 13:28,29 16:23-31 Isa 48:1,2 Jer 7:4-10 Joh 8:33 Ro 4:16 9:7
- **These stones:** Lu 19:40 Jos 4:3-8 Mt 8:11,12 21:43 Ga 3:28,29
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:7-8 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 1](#) - John MacArthur

## ONE'S LIFE PROVES WHETHER REPENTANCE IS TRUE OR FALSE!

**Therefore** - A term of conclusion. What is being concluded? John had preached a baptism of repentance (Lk 3:3), so the "snakes"

came running to out to escape the wrath of God. But for their act of "baptism" and their repentance to be shown genuine, it had to be accompanied by spiritual fruit. No fruit meant no "root" and that their "baptism of repentance" was a shallow sham. Real repentance is not a feeling but an action. For their "baptism of repentance" to be shown true called for a change in direction of their life (~ "fruit"), not just a sorrow in their heart (and not just a fear of the fire prompting them to go to John for a "fire insurance policy!") (See 2Cor 7:8-11+)

**John MacArthur** rightly remarks that "in spite of being baptized by John, the people ultimately rejected (the Messiah). (ED: See [note by Bock](#)) In light of the ever-present danger of **false repentance**, it is crucial to be able to distinguish it from true repentance. Six progressive marks of true repentance emerge from this passage as necessary. (1) True repenters must reflect on personal sin, (2) recognize divine wrath, (3) reject religious ritual, (4) reveal spiritual transformation, (5) renounce ancestry, and (6) receive the Messiah....There was nothing about John's message that was easy. There was nothing about John's message that was warm and fuzzy. It was harsh, it was strong. It was confrontational. It was devastating because John understood how prone the sinner is to a shallow, superficial repentance that does not save. (See [Luke Commentary](#)) (I encourage you to read the following sermons by Dr MacArthur for a detailed discussion of the vitally important topic of True Repentance)

- [Luke 3:7-8 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 1](#)
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#)
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 3](#)
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 4](#)

**Spurgeon** comments on **bear fruits** "Act as a change of mind would lead you to do: above all, quit the pride in which you enwrap yourselves, and leave the serpent motives which now actuate you. Lord, save us from a fruitless repentance, which would be only an aggravation of our previous sins." ([Luke](#) - exposition)

**Bear fruits** ([karpos](#)) in **keeping** ([áxios](#)) with **repentance** ([metanoia](#) - an "about/face" in the heart) - **Bear** ([poieo](#)) is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) meaning "Do this now!", "Don't delay". The [aorist imperative](#) even conveys a sense of urgency! Indeed when one hears the good news of the availability of the forgiveness of sins it is imperative that they respond ASAP (As Soon As Possible). They are not assured that they will ever have another opportunity (cf 1 Cor 6:2). Luke is saying simply that fruit bearing will validate heart believing. Anyone who was coming to be baptized by John thinking the act of baptism would insure forgiveness of sins was tragically mistaken! Although this command was given prior to Pentecost and the gift of the indwelling Spirit, it is my contention that in some way the Holy Spirit would enable genuine fruit, for in our natural state as Paul said "nothing good indwells" us. So we can hardly be expected to bear good fruit in such worthless soil! Although the following applies primarily to the post-Pentecost experience of believers, the principle is still apropos for those in the Old Testament who became genuine believers - [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**Spurgeon** - John was wonderfully practical in his advocacy of a holy charity and benevolence. His words cut against all greed, all hoarding, all hardening of the heart towards our fellow men. ([Luke](#) - exposition)

The word in **keeping** is the adjective [áxios](#) which strictly speaking means "bringing into balance" hence describes that which is fitting in the sense that it corresponds to what should be expected. In this case fruit (Spirit wrought [good works](#)) serve to authenticate the genuineness of one's repentance. One way to depict the meaning of [áxios](#) is to draw out a scale as shown below. The fruit should "balance" the "repentance." No fruit, no repentance.

**Repentance.....Fruit**

∧

ANOTHER DEPICTION



So in the picture of scales imagine the "weight" of your **Repentance** on one pan, perfectly balanced by the "weight" of the **fruit** your repentance produces. There are some in "evangelicalism" who teach that repentance is only a **change of mind**. The problem with this definition is that has nothing to do with one's real attitude toward sin and does not necessarily result in any change in

lifestyle. No change in lifestyle strongly suggests no change in one's heart. In other words they give no evidence of being truly born again.

We see a parallel thought in the seed (Word of God - Gospel) in the soil that proves to be good soil....

Luke 8:15+ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and **bear fruit** ([present tense](#) - bear fruit as a lifestyle) with perseverance.

A good parallel to bringing forth fruit in keeping with repentance is the use of [poieo](#) in Luke 8:21+ "But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and **do** ([poieo](#)) it."

**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** (cf Lk 19:40+) - By introducing **Abraham** into this discussion on repentance and God's wrath, John anticipates the excuse that his Jewish audience would raise, that they were exempt from God's judgment because they were children of Abraham which is exactly the (false) reasoning the Jews used in their discussion with Jesus of genuine belief in John 8:39, 53. Lk 3:8 is a clear warning by John that false ("superficial") repentance is really no repentance in the sight of God and as such would not deliver one from the impending **wrath** of God. As an aside while the Jews did not inherit saving faith from Abraham, they did inherit their sin propensity from Abraham (cf Ro 5:12+).

When the Jews responded to Jesus claiming Abraham as their father, notice that Jesus in essence told them if that is the case, then bring forth fruit in keeping with their profession of "paternal possession"...

They (the Jews) answered and said to Him, "**Abraham is our father.**" Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, **do** ([imperfect tense](#) - again and again, over and over do) the deeds of Abraham (cf "fruit in keeping with repentance"). (John 8:39+)

Paul taught the same truth in Romans...

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly (physically, by Jewish ancestry they could trace back to Abraham), nor is circumcision (the physical ritual) that which is outward (external) in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart (spiritual circumcision of Col 2:11-14+), by the Spirit, not by the letter (by keeping the law or doing "meritorious" works); and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28-29+)

No fruit means no root, like the men in Titus 1:16+ "They profess to know God, but by their deeds ("bad fruit!") they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

Jesus warned his Jewish hearers that if they did not enter the Kingdom of God through Him, that one day in the future the Lord would say...

"I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from me, all you evildoers." In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth **when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob** and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. (Luke 13:27, 28)

Finally the rich man who was in hell was not delivered out by claiming Abraham as his father (Luke 16:24-26+).

**From these stones** - If God chose, He could make children of Abraham out of rocks![The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) adds that "The idea of raising people from **stones** appears in Greek mythology. Some scholars have suggested that John makes a wordplay between the Aramaic words for "children" and "stones."

**MacArthur on from these stones** - The imagery may echo OT verses such as Ezekiel 11:19+ ("I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh"); Ezekiel 36:26+ ("I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."); God can sovereignly turn a heart of stone into a believing heart. He can raise up children to Abraham from inanimate objects if He chooses—or even from stony-hearted Gentiles (cf. Gal 3:29+). Abraham's true children are not merely physical descendants, but those who follow his faith, believing God's Word the way he did (Ro 4:11-16; Ro 9:8; Gal 3:7, Ge 15:16+). To trust one's physical ancestry is to shift the focus of faith away from God Himself—and that is spiritually fatal (cf. Jn 8:39-44). (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

This principle can be applied to those in America who are raised in strong Christian homes. In other words don't fall into the deceptive trap of thinking you are going to heaven because you are raised in a "heavenly" home or that you are born again just because you have "spiritual parents" (like Abraham). Faith of believing parents is not inherited. One does not become a member of God's family (Jn 1:12-13+) by natural paternal descent but by a supernaturally enabled personal decision (cf Jn 3:8+).

**Craig Evans** has an interesting note on **these stones** - It is probable that John is referring to "these stones" of Josh. 4, where twelve

stones were placed by the Jordan River as a symbol of God's deliverance of the twelve tribes of Israel: " 'Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan ...' And these twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan River, Joshua set up in Gilgal, and he said to the people of Israel, 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, "What do these stones mean?" then you shall let your children know, "Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground" ' " (Josh. 4:2, 20–22). This stone symbolism reappears in the Elijah narrative: "And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD ..." (1 Kings 18:31–32). Like Elijah of old, so now John, the promised Elijah of the last days (Mark 9:13 "I say to you, that Elijah has indeed come"), has placed a monument of twelve stones at the Jordan River and has summoned the tribes of Israel to repent and prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord's anointed. In continuity with this aspect of John's ministry, Jesus appoints twelve disciples (cf. Mark 3:14, 16). **children to Abraham** (v. 9): It is probable that in John's original Semitic diction (whether Hebrew or Aramaic) a word-play lies behind stones and children, for stone in Hebrew is *eben* and son (or child) is *ben*. This word-play is found in various Jewish sources (e.g., Josephus, J.W. 5.6.3 §272; Tg. Onq. Gen. 49:24; Tg. Zech. 10:4; Tg. Ps. 118:22; Exod. Rab. 37.1 [on Ex. 27:20]). In effect, the Baptist has said that God can raise up from these twelve **stones** (that represent the twelve tribes of Israel) **children to Abraham**; fulfillment of the Almighty's promises is not contingent upon faithless stewards. They may presume nothing. (See [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary](#))

**POSB** - Many of the people believed they were acceptable to God simply because they were Jews, that is, because they were children of Abraham and of godly forefathers. Many felt acceptable to God because they had undergone a religious ritual, that of circumcision. They felt the righteousness of their fathers had saved them. How they lived mattered little. They were saved because they were *special*—special enough to be acceptable to God. Most people are prideful. They feel they are special enough to be acceptable to God, that God would never reject them. They feel acceptable because they...

- have godly parents.
- have been baptized.
- are not too bad
- are good enough...
- are blessed with so much.
- are somewhat religious
- are members of a church.
- are regular worshippers.

(See [Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible-KJV-Luke](#))

**Trites and Larkin** - John the Baptist was...earnestly calling for a radical reorientation of life to God: "Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God" (Lk 3:8; cf. Matt 3:8). Pious words or professions of faith were not enough. Simply claiming to be descendants of Abraham proved nothing. God was the God of miracles; he could change stones into children of Abraham. In view of the imminent threat of divine judgment, a thorough "change of mind" (that is, repentance: [metanoia](#)) was called for, and there was not a moment to spare (Lk 3:3, 8; cf. 5:32). Repentance was a costly thing to be thoughtfully considered, and it was an essential feature of the preaching of John, Jesus, and the early church (Lk 5:32; 10:13; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 20:21; 26:20). Failure to repent invited catastrophe: "Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire" (Lk 3:9; cf. Matt 3:9). The privilege of Jewish heritage was plainly not enough. The prophet demanded a strong sense of social responsibility to avert the possibility of a terrible judgment that would "sever" their roots (Lk 3:9). John's message was drastic and clearly offensive to many Jewish traditionalists who thought they were good enough—just as many churchgoers do today! (See Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – [Luke. Acts](#))

**Fruits** (2590) ([karpos](#)) is used in its literal sense to refer to fruit, produce or offspring, and thus describes that which is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism. In the NT the figurative (metaphorical) uses predominate and this is particularly true in the Gospels, where human actions and words are viewed as "spiritual" **fruit** growing out of a person's essential being or character. Good fruit is the result of reliance on the Good Spirit!

Luke's uses of **karpos** - Lk. 1:42; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 3:9; Lk. 6:43; Lk. 6:44; Lk. 8:8; Lk. 12:17; Lk. 13:6; Lk. 13:7; Lk. 13:9; Lk. 20:10

**Keeping** (514) [áxios](#) ([axios](#)) rom [ágō](#) = to weigh strictly speaking means bringing up the other beam of the scales. Having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much. Counterbalancing - weighing as much (of like value, worth as much). Bringing into balance and hence equivalent or equal value/similar worth (Ro 8:18, see use in Lxx of Pr 3:15, 8:11). Other nuances of [axios](#)

include describing that which is fitting or appropriate (1Cor 16:2), that which is deserving (Mt 10:10), that which "deserves" to be considered or accepted (1Ti 1:15), that which is worthy of praise (Rev 4:11), that which corresponds to or is congruent with something else (Mt 3:8, Luke 3:8, 23:41, 26:20). Worthy or deserving of evil (Rev 16:6).

Axios - 39v - appropriate(1), deserve(2), deserving(4), fitting(2), keeping(2), unworthy\*(1), worthy(29). Matt. 3:8; Matt. 10:10; Matt. 10:11; Matt. 10:13; Matt. 10:37; Matt. 10:38; Matt. 22:8; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 7:4; Lk. 10:7; Lk. 12:48; Lk. 15:19; Lk. 15:21; Lk. 23:15; Lk. 23:41; Jn. 1:27; Acts 13:25; Acts 13:46; Acts 23:29; Acts 25:11; Acts 25:25; Acts 26:20; Acts 26:31; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 8:18; 1 Co. 16:4; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Tim. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Tim. 6:1; Heb. 11:38; Rev. 3:4; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:2; Rev. 5:4; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 5:12; Rev. 16:6

#### Related Resources:

- [What are some Bible verses about fruit? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the key to bearing fruit as a Christian? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Does the vine and branches passage in John 15 mean that salvation can be lost? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that you will know them by their fruit in Matthew 7:16? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean to be a fruitful Christian? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Luke 3:9 "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."**

- Lu 13:7,9 23:29-31 Isa 10:33,34 Eze 15:2-4 31:18 Da 4:14,23 Mt 3:10 7:19 Joh 15:6 Heb 10:28 12:29
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#) - John MacArthur

**NET** Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

**KJV** And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

**ESV** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

**NLT** 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."

**CSB** Even now the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees! Therefore every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

### IMMINENCY OF JUDGMENT AND URGENCY OF THE WARNING

**Indeed...already** - ("Even now" - ESV, NET) - This connects verse 9 with John's urgent call to bear true fruit (Lk 3:8) in light of the somber warning in Lk 3:7, and speaks of the **imminency** (imminence speaks of something "jutting out or overhanging") of this coming judgment ("overhanging" their heads so to speak!). The **ESV Study Bible** ([borrow](#)) note says "The kingdom of God is not a remote future event but was revealed in a new and decisive way in the ministry of Jesus, for which John the Baptist was preparing the way." Of course, the Kingdom does have a future component when the King of kings returns and sets up His 1000 year Messianic Kingdom on earth (See characteristics of this wonderful kingdom = [Millennium](#)).

Jesus used the same graphic imagery to depict judgment of false prophets in Matthew 7:19+. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

As **Spurgeon** said "No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do; he was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree." ([Flee From The Wrath To Come](#))

**Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees**- ('the ax is ready to cut the trees down at their roots') God is the Divine Woodman! Judgment is close, one axe blow away! (cf Lk 13:6-9+) John is boldly explaining what would happen if their repentance was not accompanied by **good works**. He paints for them a clear picture they can understand -- it is the portrait of a tree which is

alive but which is about to have its life-giving roots cut, clearly killing the tree. By describing the use of an ax John's suggest sudden, catastrophic judgment for one who is unrepentant and unfruitful.

[Adam Clarke](#) comments that "It has been well observed, that there is an allusion here to a woodman, who, having marked a tree for excision, lays his axe at its root, and strips off his outer garment, that he may wield his blows more powerfully, and that his work may be quickly performed."

**POSB** - There are many trees: some lofty (the proud), some stately (leaders), some diseased, some bearing good fruit, some bearing bad fruit, and some bearing no fruit at all. All trees that do not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire. See Heb 6:8, Ro 3:21-23, 1 Pe 4:17-18, Rev. 21:8. (See [Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible-KJV-Luke](#))

**Wiersbe** - John reminded them that God gets to the *root* of things and is not impressed with religious profession that does not produce fruit. In the last judgment, the true believers (wheat) will be gathered by God, while the lost sinners (chaff) will be burned in the fire. (Scroll to page 147 in [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**So every tree that does not bear good ([kalos](#)) fruit is cut down ([ekkopto](#)) and thrown into the fire ([pur](#)) - Every tree** suggests individual judgment. Repentance that does not bring forth good fruits is a false repentance and if never "repented of" (so to speak) and replaced by genuine repentance, and such a spurious repentance will take one straight to **the fire** of hell. God is about to swing the ax! Bad trees would be easily recognized by bad fruit (or no fruit) and would be cut down and thrown into "the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41; cf Mt 18:8; Jude 1:6-7<sup>+</sup>). A few decades later in A D 70, the ax fell on Jerusalem and thousands of Jews died by famine or sword. This was a foreshadowing of the divine judgment that would fall on all Jews and Gentiles who refuse to repent and believe in Messiah (cf. Joel 3:1-2, 12-14; Zeph. 3:8).

The Jews would have been familiar with John's image from the words of their last prophet (the one who preceded John). Thus Malachi wrote

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger (John the Baptist), and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord (the Messiah), Whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the Messenger of the covenant (MESSIAH), in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3 "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness (the final and full fulfillment of this prophecy is at the end of this age and the dawn of the New Age, the [Millennium!](#)). (Malachi 3:1-3+)

Then in Malachi 4 the prophet prophesies of the future wrath of God...

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." 2 "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall (Malachi 4:1-2+)

Malachi ends with prediction of the coming of a great and terrible day...

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6+)

So here John just picks up where the last prophet Malachi left off declaring a similar message that **every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**"

**NET Note on thrown into the fire** - The image of "fire" serves to further heighten the intensity of the judgment referred to. It is John's way of summoning all people to return to God with all their heart and avoid his unquenchable wrath soon to be poured out. John's language and imagery is probably ultimately drawn from the OT where Israel is referred to as a fruitless vine (Hos 10:1-2; Jer 2:21-22) and the image of an "ax" is used to indicate God's judgment (Ps 74:5-6; Jer 46:22).

**NET Note on thrown** - the present tense has futuristic force here. (Ed: The [present tense](#) is used in a [proleptic](#) sense for so certain is the wrath of God to one day in the future come to pass at which time all unbelievers will be thrown into the Lake of Fire - cf Rev 20:10+ and Rev 20:11-15+)

**John MacArthur** applies John's words in Luke 37-10 writing that "when you give a witness for Christ to another individual, you have to talk about the wrath to come. The wrath to come is speaking of final, eternal judgment. Jesus made that a theme of His preaching. He preached more on hell than He did on heaven. He preached more on hell than anybody ever preached on hell. Why? Because He didn't like sinners, because He wanted to damn sinners? No, because He wanted to warn sinners. And one of



the things that you must preach when you preach for a true repentance is the seriousness, the eternity, and the suffering of eternal hell. John preached the wrath to come. Obviously the indication here in Luke chapter 3 is that these people were coming to him to flee the wrath to come, which meant that he was pointing out to them those passages in the Old Testament that indicate when Messiah comes wrath will come with Him. And it is essential in true repentance to understand the wrath to come, to recognize that reality. There is a hell and it is forever and it is a forever alienation from God and a forever conscious punishment, conscious torment. That's what makes forgiveness urgent. That's what makes forgiveness good news. That is a strong motivation. Any faithful preacher preaches the wrath to come....John uses very graphic terms and he speaks very harsh words because he is so profoundly concerned about the wrath to come. And the Jews understood it. Why else would these Jews come flocking out there? They knew when Messiah came that there would be blessing but they also knew there would be fiery judgment. That was very clear from Malachi. And there would be a terrible day of burning. There would be terrible wrath. They knew that. They wanted to make sure they got the blessings and not the wrath. ([True Repentance](#)).

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**Good** (2570) **kalos** describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis (as discussed below) on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. **Kalos** referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon). The New Testament uses of **kalos** are similar to the secular Greek -- outwardly fair, as the stones of the temple (Lk 21:5); well adapted to its purpose, as salt ("salt is **good**" Mk 9:50); competent for an office, as deacons ("**good** servant of Christ Jesus" 1 Ti 4:6); a steward ("serving one another, as **good** stewards of the manifold grace of God", 1 Pe 4:10+); a **good** soldier (2Ti 2:3+); expedient, wholesome ("it is **better** for you to enter life crippled" Mk 9:43, 45, 47); morally good, noble, as works ("Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your **good** works" Mt 5:16+); conscience ("we are sure that we have a **good** conscience", see note [Hebrews 13:18](#)). The phrase *it is good*, i.e., a good or proper thing ("It is **good** not to eat meat or to drink wine", Ro 14:21+). In the [Septuagint \(LXX\)](#) **kalos** is the most commonly used word for **good** as opposed to **evil** (e.g., see Ge 2:17; 24:50; Isaiah 5:20).

**Kalos in Luke** - Lk. 3:9; Lk. 6:38; Lk. 6:43; Lk. 8:15; Lk. 9:33; Lk. 14:34; Lk. 21:5;

**Cut down** (1581) (**ekkopto** from **ek** =from, out + **kópto** = cut) literally means to cut off or from, cutting so as to sever. It means to cause to cease by removing, to do away with, to eliminate.

Ekkopto - 10v - Matt. 3:10; Matt. 5:30; Matt. 7:19; Matt. 18:8; Lk. 3:9; Lk. 13:7; Lk. 13:9; Rom. 11:22; Rom. 11:24; 2 Co. 11:12

**Fire** (4442) (**pur**) refers to literal fire (Mt 13:40; 17:15, etc). **Pur** is used figuratively of God inflicting punishment (Heb 12:29), of disunion (Lk 12:49), of the tongue that kindles strife and discord (James 3:5-6), of trials (1 Pe 1:7, Rev 3:18), at Pentecost (Acts 2:3 = "tongues as of fire"), of burning up useless works (1 Cor 3:10-15), as a description of doing something with great difficulty in Jude 1:23 ("snatching them out of the fire"). **Fire in the context of judgment as in the present passages, the eternal fire, the place of punishment** (Mt. 13:42, 50; Mt. 5:22; 18:9; Mk 9:4 Mt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 1:7 Rev. 14:10); the [Lake of fire](#) (Rev. 19:20; Rev 20:10, 14, 15; Rev 21:8). All of Luke's uses of pur - Lk. 3:9; Lk. 3:16; Lk. 3:17; Lk. 9:54; Lk. 12:49; Lk. 17:29; Lk. 22:55

### Luke 3:10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

- **What:** Lu 3:8 Acts 2:37 Acts 9:6 Acts 16:30
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#) - John MacArthur

## A SERIES OF QUESTIONS ABOUT "FRUIT"

Undoubtedly spurred on by the dire warnings (Lk 3:7, 9 of more warnings in Lk 3:16, 17), in this next section (Lk 3:10-14) **the crowds** ask questions about repentance which give John the opportunity to explain what the fruit of repentance looks like in real life.

**The crowds were questioning** - These were the "**brood of vipers**" (Lk 3:7) and now we see why he applied this term to them and not just the Pharisees and Sadducees. **Were questioning** is in the [imperfect tense](#), indicating the repetition of these questions. They were justifiably concerned!

**Life Application** notes - John's message took root in unexpected places—among the poor, the dishonest, and even the hated occupation army. These people were painfully aware of their needs and they were honestly seeking to know what to do to change their lives. Did anyone follow John's advice? Surely some did, and their softened hearts became ready to receive the message of the One who was to come. ([Notes on Luke](#))

**Then (oun)** - The idea is therefore or consequently. In light of John's clear, strong warning in Lk 3:7-9, how should we respond? Clearly, John's bold "hell-fire" style elicited a reaction from the crowd! It is as if they are asking "How can we follow through with practical application of your message John?" Would it be that all congregations responded similarly! So many sit and soak and go off into their Sunday afternoon and new week with hardly a vague recollection of the pastor's message! Perhaps we need more "John the Baptist" like messages to arrest their attention and stir their hearts!

**What shall we do (poieo)** - In light of the fact that John warned they must **bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance** and clearly stated their physical relationship to **Abraham** was of no value, three groups ask John in essence "What fruit should we bring forth?" We see similar questions from a **lawyer** (Lk 10:25+) and a rich young **ruler** (Lk 18:18-22+). The rich young ruler could not let go of his earthly treasure to gain heavenly treasure for when he heard Jesus' demand "he became very sad, for he was extremely rich." (Lk 18:23+) prompting Jesus to declare "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Note that John's three responses (Lk 3:11ff) have to do with stewardship of money and material possessions, or how to make use of one's wealth and possessions to the furtherance of God's work. Elsewhere in Luke's writing this theme is seen (cf Luke 8:3+; Acts 2:44-47+; Acts 4:32-37+; Acts 5:1-11+; Acts 6:1-6+). This should be no surprise as these are "idols" for most people and are difficult to release from our grasp!

**J Vernon McGee** - This is a practical message that John gave to these people who came from different classes and conditions. My friend, if you are a printer, you reveal that you are a Christian by the way you print. If you are a soldier, you reveal your Christianity by the way you soldier. If you are a housewife, you reveal your Christianity by the way you are a housewife. You reveal what you are. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20+). (See [Thru the Bible](#))

**Robert Neighbour** - The believer is a child of light, and he should walk no longer in darkness. God's message is the same throughout the whole Bible—"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." ([Wells of Living Water](#))

**Kent Hughes** - John's answer is somewhat surprising. We might have expected that he would ask them to do something **penitential** ("Go do four good acts to the orphans in your town") or **ecclesiastical** ("Commit yourself to your local synagogue") or perhaps **devotional** ("Pray through the Psalms"). But significantly, John's advice was **ethical**. He asked them to change how they treated their fellow human beings. It is not uncommon for people who do not know Christ to perform elevated ethical deeds in an attempt to prove the authenticity of their "Christianity." They may take up a just social cause, then present it as evidence of their spiritual life—"I am pro-life—therefore I am a Christian," or "I am an advocate for the poor—this proves my Christianity." **A real danger comes with spiritual presumption stemming from exemplary ethical performance.** However, it is also true that if you are truly regenerate and repentant, your faith will most surely affect **how you treat others**, especially those who are closest to you—your family, your business associates, your employees, and those in need. **If there is no change in your personal ethics, no elevation of your concern and care for others, you may be self-deceived about your salvation.** (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Luke 3:11** 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.

- **He who has** two: Lu 11:41 18:22 19:8 Isa 58:7-11 Da 4:27 Mt 25:40 Mk 14:5-8 Joh 13:29 Ac 10:2,4,31 2Co 8:3-14 1Ti 6:18 Heb 6:10 Jas 1:27 Jas 2:15-26 1Jn 3:17 4:20
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#) - John MacArthur

#### Related Passages:

Luke 8:15+ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and **bear fruit** with perseverance.

**BE GENEROUS**

**And he would answer and say** (imperfect tense - again and again) **to them, "The man who has two tunics ([chiton](#)) is to **share** ([metadidomi](#)) with him who has none; and he who has food ([broma](#)) is to **do** ([poieo](#)) likewise** - This should not be too difficult because you could only wear one tunic at a time anyway! This was the inner garment Jews wore. A person unwilling to share even what he did not need clearly was unrepentant. His heart was still focused on self and his/her selfish desires. **To do** is a command in the [present imperative](#), a command that can truly only be kept continually by continually [depending on the Holy Spirit to obey!](#) Only a repentant person could truly obey this command!

**Share** ([metadidomi](#)) is a command ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to share with those who have less (Is 58:7; 1 Ti 6:17, 18; Jas 2:14–20). All three of John's answers imply that true repentance is accompanied by a clear change in one's [ethical](#) behavior. John mentions clothing and food, the basic necessities of life. The giver was to love and care so much that he would be gripped with mercy and unselfishness. He would give what he had. Such fruit would be evidence of repentance, of a life truly changed, of a man who was truly seeking God to forgive his sins.

**MacArthur** on share with him who has none - Though seemingly trivial, sharing such basic necessities as clothing and food with those in need fulfills the command to love one's neighbor (Lk 10:27; cf. Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8)—which is second in importance only to the command to love God (Mt. 22:37–38). (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Cornerstone Biblical Commentary** - John told the crowds to share their food and surplus clothes with the poor, who are often an object of concern in Luke-Acts (Lk 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 12:33; 14:13; 19:8; Acts 4:34-35; 9:36; 10:4, 31; 24:17). (See [Luke, Acts](#))

**Kent Hughes** asks "Do we want to have an accurate evaluation of the state of our spirituality? Here are some biblical tests:

Are we *generous* with our possessions? Do we share our homes, our cars, our clothing, our food with others—joyfully? Or are we loath to share? Do we always push for more and then grasp it tightly?

Do we enjoy *giving* to family, friends, and, more significantly, those in need? Do we give regularly and sacrificially to the Lord? If you are a Christian but do not give regularly to the Lord, if you are tight, if you find it difficult to give to God, you are in spiritual trouble, and possibly you are not even a Christian at all! We must each do regular self-checks, including me!

One of the reasons healthy Christians like to give to their church and to others is because they are indwelt with the Spirit of Christ, who gave himself for us and said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

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. (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

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**Tunics** (garment) ([5509](#))([chiton](#)) is a masculine noun. which refers to a close-fitting inner vest, an inner garment, an undergarment or in some contexts to any garment. At times two tunics seem to have been worn, probably of different materials for ornament or luxury (Mt. 10:10; Mk 6:9; Lu 3:11; 9:3). The high priest rent his clothes (Mk 14:63). In the Septuagint chiton is used of Adam's garment of skin (Ge 3:21). Chiton is used 5x in Genesis to describe Joseph's "varicolored **tunic**." (Ge 37:3, 23, 31-33) Jesus uses both **chiton** and **himation** in (Lk 6:29). In Mk 14:63 the high priest tore "his **clothes**" referring to an outer cloak, which in this context was equivalent to **himation**. See [Encyclopedia Britannica description](#).

**Tunics** - These were garments worn under the cloak (cf. Lk 6:29). "Loose-fitting, knee length garment worn next to the skin (Matthew 10:10 ;Mark 6:9 )" (Holman Bible Dictionary)

**Share** ([3330](#))([metadidomi](#) from **meta** - with, denoting association + **didomi** - give) means to give part of, give a share of a thing..

**Metadidomi** - 5x in 5v - Usage: gives(1), impart(2), share(2). In Lxx only in Pr 11:26 and Job 31:17 ("And the orphan has not shared it.")

Luke 3:11 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."

Romans 1:11+ For I long to see you so that I may **impart** some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

Romans 12:8+ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who leads, with

diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Ephesians 4:28+ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to **share** with one who has need.

1 Thessalonians 2:8+ Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to **impart** to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

**Food** (1033) **broma** means food of any kind, anything you chew for nourishment, anything used as food (often translated "meat" in KJV but not restricted to meat) **Broma** is used most often as a general references to "food" (Mt 14:15; Mk 7:19+; Ro 14:20; 1Co. 6:13; 1Ti. 4: 3; Heb. 9:10)

**Luke 3:12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"**

- Lu 7:29 15:1,2 18:13 Mt 21:31,32
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#) - John MacArthur

## THE TAX COLLECTORS

**And some tax collectors (telones) also came to be baptized (baptizo), and they said to him, "Teacher (didaskalos), what shall we do (poieo)?"** - "Tax collectors would bid to collect taxes for the Roman government and then add a surcharge, which they kept. Since tax collectors worked for Rome, they were viewed as traitors to their own people and were not well liked. Yet even they were moved by John's call. " (NET) Note the word **some**, so clearly not all of this despised group came! They were horribly corrupt so they all should have been coming. The despised **tax collectors** referred to John as teacher. Luke alludes to their baptism later

When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! 26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. 27 "This is the one about whom it is written, '**BEHOLD**, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' 28 "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 When all the people and the **tax collectors** heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, **having been baptized with the baptism of John**. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John** (Lk 7:24-30+)

**Vincent** on **tax collectors** (publicans) - Publicans ([telones](#)). From telos, a tax, and oneomai, to buy. The collectors of Roman imposts. The Romans farmed out the direct taxes and customs-duties to capitalists, on their payment of a certain sum in publicum, into the public treasury, whence they were called publicani, publicans. Sometimes this sum, being greater than any one person could pay, was paid by a company. Under these were the submagistri, living in the provinces; and under these again the portitores, or actual custom-house officers, who are referred to by the term  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\ \nu\omicron\iota$  in the New Testament. They were often chosen from the dregs of the people, and were so notorious for their extortions that they were habitually included in the same category with harlots and sinners. "If a Jew could scarcely persuade himself that it was right to pay taxes, how much more heinous a crime must it have been in his eyes to become the questionably honest instrument for collecting them. If a publican was hated, how still more intense must have been the disgust entertained against a publican who was also a Jew" (Farrar, "Life of Christ"). The word "publican," as a popular term of reproach, was used even by our Lord (Matt. 18:17). Even the Gentiles despised them. Farrar cites a Greek saying, "All publicans are robbers."

**Teacher (didaskalos), what shall we do?** - John had clearly told them to bring forth good fruit that proved their repentance was legitimate. They wanted to know how this applied to them and he goes straight to their most prized possession - corrupt collections.

**Wiersbe** - John the Baptist was also a *teacher* (Luke 3:12). He not only preached publicly, but he also had a personal ministry to the people, telling them how to practice their new faith (Luke 3:10-14). He told them not to be selfish but to share their blessings with others (see Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37). (Scroll to page 147 in [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

While tax collectors were hated by the Jews, it was not a crime to be a tax collector. The crime was to in defrauding and extorting the people which usually "went with the territory!" When the tax collectors came to John the Baptist to be baptized, it is notable that

he did not tell them to quit their jobs but he told them to "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." (Lk 3:13+). Jesus Himself affirmed the propriety and legality of paying taxes when He commanded "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Lk 20:25+).

**John MacArthur** gives this background on **tax collectors** - The Roman occupation of Israel involved more than just a military presence; the nation was also subject to Roman taxation. The taxes in Galilee, for example, were forwarded by tax collectors to Herod Antipas, and by him to Rome. Antipas sold tax franchises to the highest bidder, and such franchises were a lucrative business. Tax collectors had a certain amount that they were required to collect, and whatever they collected beyond that they were permitted to keep (cf. Luke 3:12-13). In addition to the poll tax (on everyone, including slaves), income tax (about one percent), and land tax (one tenth of all grain, and one fifth of all wine and fruit), there were taxes on the transport of goods, letters, produce, using roads, crossing bridges, and almost anything else the rapacious, greedy minds of the tax collectors could think of. All of that left plenty of room for larceny, extortion, exploitation, and even loan sharking, as tax collectors loaned money at exorbitant interest to those who were unable to pay their taxes. Tax collectors also employed thugs to physically intimidate people into paying, and to beat up those who refused. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Bock on tax collectors (telones)** - To understand a little about the reply that John gives to the toll collectors, one must examine the background of the office. Taxes in the Roman Empire were a complex affair. **There were different ranks of collectors, and there were different taxes to collect.** The system of collection was known as **tax (or toll) farming**. City rulers leased the right to collect taxes to an individual or group, who had bid for this right and had paid for it in advance. Thus, the collector would not only have to collect the tax that Rome had stipulated, but he also would have to add a surcharge to meet his expenses, an additional charge over which he had total control. In most of the empire this job of collection went to wealthy Romans who were designated "publicans." They in turn would hire others to do the actual collection, the "tax collectors" proper (telōnēs; BAGD 812 and BAA 1619 are clear on the distinction between these groups). And at times these tax collectors would hire subordinates, becoming "head tax collectors." Because of the political situation, in 44 B.C. Julius Caesar reduced taxes in Palestine, so that publicans ceased to operate there (Donahue 1971: 44; Josephus Antiquities 14.10.5–6 §§200–209). Collecting direct taxes for Rome became the responsibility of the prefect, who hired a δημοσιῶνης (dēmosiōnēs, state or public tax official; lit., farmer of the revenue)—a term that does not appear in the NT—to collect taxes. Direct taxes included the poll tax (a general citizen's tax) and the land tax (a tax on one's harvest) (Michel, TDNT 8:97–98). In addition to these direct taxes, there also was a set of indirect taxes on all items purchased or leased in a region, including a type of sales tax, which involved the hiring of τελαῖ, the term Luke uses here. Dues were collected at major cities such as Jerusalem, Jericho, and Caesarea.<sup>28</sup> As one can see, this system of multiple collectors, each of whom could add his own surcharge, could create great abuse. In fact, a Palmyrene inscription from a slightly later period records an attempt to control abuses (Dittenberger 1903–5: #629). (See [Luke : Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Baptized (907) (baptizo)** from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. A study of the 77 NT uses reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism, which is certainly the case in this context. Luke's uses - Lk. 3:7; Lk. 3:12; Lk. 3:16; Lk. 3:21; Lk. 7:29; Lk. 7:30; Lk. 11:38; Lk. 12:50; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:13; Acts 8:16; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47; Acts 10:48; Acts 11:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:3; Acts 19:4; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16

**Teacher (1320) (didaskalos)** is one who provides instruction or systematically imparts truth. The **teacher** teaches in such a way as to shape will of one being taught by content of what is taught. Someone has said that "The great teacher is the one who turns our ears into eyes so that we can see the truth." Henry Brooks added that "A (Bible) teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

**Tax collectors** (publicans) (5057) (**telones** from **telos** = tax + **onéomai** = to buy) means a reaper of the taxes or customs, tax-collector, one who pays to the government a certain sum for the privilege of collecting the taxes and customs of a district. See more discussion of **telones** in Lk 5:27. Luke mentions tax collectors six times in his Gospel - Lk 3:12+; Lk 5:27-32+; Lk 7:29-34+; Lk 15:1+; Lk 18:10-13+, Lk 19:2+.

**Luke 3:13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.**

- **Collect:** Lu 19:8 Ps 18:23 Pr 28:13 Isa 1:16,17 55:6,7 Eze 18:21,22,27,28 Mic 6:8 Mt 7:12 1Co 6:10 Eph 4:28 Tit 2:11,12 Heb 12:1
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole

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## JOHN'S ANSWER: BE HONEST

The word **honest** means not disposed to cheat or defraud; not deceptive or fraudulent; free of deceit; truthful and sincere; not given to lying, cheating, stealing, etc; a person who is honest does not tell lies or cheat people, and obeys the law ; used about the things that someone says and does. The human quality of communicating and acting truthfully and with fairness.

**And he said to them, "Collect (prasso in present imperative) no more than what you have been ordered (diatasso) to -** Collecting taxes was not a crime, but tax collectors were notorious for collecting more than the required amount ([see above on this complex system of tax collecting](#)). **Spurgeon** adds that "They were accustomed to gather the taxes unfairly, and to increase the rates by oppressing the people, getting, perhaps, twice or even ten times more out of them than they could legally claim. John speaks to the point, does he not?"

**Collect no more - No more** is emphatic in Greek. John did not try to placate people. He went directly to the heart of the matter for a tax collector, their collections. They commonly charged more than would have been necessary to satisfy the Roman authorities, keeping the excess for themselves. This would be an easy "marker" to determine is a tax collector had truly repented and experienced a change of heart and a change in their notoriously dishonest practices. John went directly to the "pocket book" of these men.

**Collect** is a command in the [present imperative](#) which means that henceforth a truly repentant tax collector was to continually be honest in their collection practices. The fruit of honesty replacing dishonesty proves that the tax collector had experienced genuine repentance. Some of the tax collectors took John's message to heart and repented (Mt. 21:31–32; Zaccheus in Lk 19:1–10+).

**Collect (4238)(prasso)** means first to being about or accomplish something through activity. Prasso was used in secular Greek with the meaning of to exact money from one (Herotodus). Liddell-Scott says **prasso** was often used in this sense "of state-officers, who collected the taxes."

**Ordered (1299)(diatasso)** from **dia** = through + **tasso** = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done.

**Luke 3:14 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.**

- **soldiers:** Mt 8:5 Ac 10:7
- Ro 13:9,10 Php 2:15
- **accuse** : Lu 19:8 Ex 20:16 23:1 Lev 19:11 Tit 2:3 Rev 12:10
- **be content:** Php 4:11 1Ti 6:8-10 Heb 13:5,6
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:7-14 False and True Repentance](#)- Steven Cole
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## DESCRIPTION OF "FRUIT" FOR SOLDIERS: DON'T EXTORT INSTEAD BE CONTENT

**MacArthur** - By selecting tax collectors and soldiers as examples of those who repented, John was making the general point that true repentance produces a life that is transformed from being characterized by sin to being benchmarked by virtue. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, do these virtues characterize your life? We're not speaking about **perfection** (for none of us on earth have yet "arrived" - i.e., been glorified) but **direction**, continually growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18+).

**Some soldiers (strateuomai) were questioning him "And what about us, what shall we do (poieo)?"**- Possibly Roman soldiers, but some (Stein, NAC) think they were Jewish, likely employed by Herod Antipas. While we cannot be definitive, it does at least

seem reasonable that they may have been Jewish soldiers for why would Roman soldiers come out to hear John and consider his baptism? Jewish soldiers would be more likely to do so.

**Clinton** says "These are probably not Roman soldiers, but Jewish troops employed by Herod Antipas (cf. Lk 23:11). Josephus refers to such troops. Their mention beside the tax collectors may indicate they were assigned to assist and protect them in their duties. John tells them not to use violent intimidation or to falsely accuse others for monetary gain, but to be content with their wages (opsōnion, a military term for rations or provisions). Just as tax collectors were tempted to grow rich through excessive charges, soldiers were tempted to use their position of power to intimidate and control others for financial advantage." (ZIBBC-[Luke](#))

**Robertson** on **soldiers** - Men on service, militantes rather than milites (Plummer). So Paul in 2 Tim. 2:4. An old word like [stratiōtēs], soldier. Some of these soldiers acted as police to help the publicans (tax collectors). But they were often rough and cruel. **Soldiers** are not told to resign but to avoid the moral temptations of their profession. John does not say that working for the Roman government or serving as a soldier is in itself morally wrong, but he insists that God expects upright conduct from his people.

**Pulpit Commentary** on **soldiers** - legionaries of Rome, or mercenaries in the pay of one of the tetrarchs or neighboring princes. The lesson is clear. As above to the publicans, so here to the soldiers, John says, "Remain in that profession of arms; you may, if you will, serve God in it, for it is never the work which ennobles, hut the way in which the work is done." ([Luke 3](#))

**Bible Background Commentary** on **soldiers** - Some commentators think these "soldiers" are Jewish police who accompanied tax gatherers or Herodian mercenaries, but more likely these are the light auxiliary non-Jewish troops that Rome recruited from Syria. Although the large legions were stationed in Syria, not Palestine, some soldiers were stationed in Palestine (Caesarea and Jerusalem) and smaller bands no doubt marched through. The frequency of Roman soldiers' illegal concubinage with native women also indicates that all soldiers did not remain in their garrison at all times. Jews were exempt from required military service due especially to their dietary laws. Soldiers occasionally protested their wages, creating trouble with the government (e.g., the frontier mutiny of a.d. 14); they were known for extorting money from local people they intimidated or for falsely accusing them (see, e.g., the papyri; Apuleius). (See [The IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force"**([diaseio](#)) - Literally don't shake anyone violently (like our modern idiomatic phrase "[shake down](#)")!

**Spurgeon** explains **Do not take money from anyone by force**- Those rough Roman soldiers, as they had conquered the country, were very apt to treat the people as though they were their slaves; so John says to them, "**Do violence to no man.**".... ([Luke](#) - exposition)

**Robertson** on **take...by force** ([diaseio](#)) - Here only in the N. T., but in the LXX and common in ancient Greek. It means to shake (, earthquake) thoroughly (δία [dia]) and so thoroughly to terrify, to extort money or property by intimidating (3 Macc. 7:21). The Latin employs concutere, so. It was a process of blackmail to which Socrates refers (Xenophon, Memorabilia, ii. 9, 1). This was a constant temptation to soldiers. Might does not make right with Jesus.

**Do not....accuse anyone falsely** ([sukophanteo](#)) - Why would they do this? We call it blackmail which means to exert pressure on someone through unjustified threats to make a gain. If the demand is paid, the accusations are dropped.

**Be content** ([arkeo](#)) **with your wages** ([opsonion](#)) -The [passive voice](#) means be content (contentment coming from an outside source, the ultimate source being Christ, His Spirit, cp Php 4:11<sup>+</sup>, Php 4:13<sup>+</sup>) and in the [present imperative](#) calls for this to be their habitual practice (something ultimately only possible as we are supernaturally energized by the Spirit. cf Php 2:13NLT<sup>+</sup>). True repentance results not in changed feelings as much as in changed actions. The present tense means this is not to be an occasional practice but a soldier's new lifestyle.

**Robertson** explains that "Discontent with wages was a complaint of mercenary soldiers. This word **forwages** (see below) was originally anything cooked (opson, cooked food), and bought (from *ōneomai*, to buy). Hence, "rations," "pay," wages. Opsarion, diminutive of opson, was anything eaten with bread like broiled fish. So opsōnion comes to mean whatever is bought to be eaten with bread and then a soldier's pay or allowance (Polybius, and other late Greek writers) as in 1 Cor. 9:7. Paul uses the singular of a preacher's pay (2 Cor. 11:8) and the plural of the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) = death (death is the diet of sin). ([Luke 3](#))

**Spurgeon** explains that the soldiers "were very apt to be contending for an increase in their pay, and to drag civilians before the courts with false accusations unless they chose to give them bribes to let them go. John does not mince matters with any of his hearers; he speaks with wonderful plainness and courage, and therein proves himself to be a true herald of his Master." ([Luke](#) - exposition)

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**Soldiers** ([4754](#))([strateuomai](#) from **strategos** = army, **stratos** = an encamped army) means literally to perform military service, serve as a soldier in the army, go to fight, carry on a military campaign, make a military expedition, lead soldiers to war or to battle.

**Take by force** (only NT use)(1286)(**diaseio** from **dia** = intensifies **seio** = to shake - English "seismic") literally means "shake violently" and came to be used figuratively as a legal term meaning something like **extort**. The English slang expression "shake down" possesses the same connotation. Socrates referred to it as blackmail. It was used by the medical community to describe diseases that caused shaking and tremor. **Vincent** adds the idea is "*to shake violently; hence to agitate or terrify*; and so to extort money from one by terrifying him. The corresponding Latin word *concutere* is used by later writers in the same sense. Xenophon says of Socrates' "I know of his once having heard from Crito that life at Athens was a hard thing for a man who desired to mind his own business. 'For,' said he, 'they bring actions against me, not because they are wronged by me, but because they think I would rather pay money than have any trouble'" ("Memorabilia," ii., 9, 1). For this process of blackmail, *seio*, to *shake*, was used....The word in this passage of Luke has the later, secondary meaning, *to extort*; and therefore the American Revisers rightly insist on, *extort from no man by violence*. It is used by medical writers, as, for instance, by Hippocrates, of shaking the palsied or benumbed limbs of a patient; or of a shaking by which the liver was relieved of an obstruction. Luke also uses two other compounds of the verb  $\sigma\epsilon\omega$ :  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\epsilon\omega$ , *to beckon*, Acts 12:17 (peculiar to Luke); and  $\nu\alpha\sigma\iota\omega$ , *to stir up*, which occurs also in Mark 15:11. Both these are also used by medical writers. ([Word Studies in the New Testament](#))

**Accuse falsely** (present tense = continually)(4811)(**sukophanteo** from **sukon** = fig + **phaino** = to bring to light) means to accuse falsely, annoy, harass, oppress, blackmail (Lk 3:14) or to extort (only other use = Lk 19:8+). Gives us our English **sycophant**. See a lengthy discussion of this word by Marvin Vincent in his notes on Lk 3:14 in [Word Studies in the New Testament](#).

(Lk 19:8) - Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

**Robertson** on **sukophanteo** - In Athens those whose business it was to inform against any one whom they might find exporting figs out of Attica were called fig-showers or sycophants (*sukophantai*). From [*sukon*], fig, and [*phainō*], show. Some modern scholars reject this explanation since no actual examples of the word meaning merely a fig-shower have been found. But without this view it is all conjectural. From the time of Aristophanes on it was used for any malignant informer or calumniator. These soldiers were tempted to obtain money by informing against the rich, blackmail again. So the word comes to mean to accuse falsely. The **sycophants** came to be a regular class of informers or slanderers in Athens. Socrates is quoted by Xenophon as actually advising Crito to employ one in self-defense, like the modern way of using one gunman against another. Demosthenes pictures a sycophant as one who "glides about the market like a scorpion, with his venomous sting all ready, spying out whom he may surprise with misfortune and ruin and from whom he can most easily extort money, by threatening him with an action dangerous in its consequences" (quoted by Vincent). The word occurs only in Luke in the N. T., here and in Luke 19:8 in the confession of Zaccheus. It occurs in the LXX and often in the old Greek.

**Gilbrant** on **sukophanteo** - This verb appears in classical Greek from the Fifth Century B.C. with the meaning "accuse falsely, defraud, slander." Frequently such action was done in the form of "blackmail" by public officials (cf. *Liddell-Scott*), but it could refer to any effort by a person who seeks to oppress or exhort someone with false charges or threats. (In the Septuagint) It is used occasionally in the Septuagint in a similar manner. In Job 35:9 Elihu spoke of how "the multitude of oppressions . . . make the oppressed to cry." In Psalm 119:122 (LXX 118:22) the Psalmist entreated God saying: "Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me." An underlying principle throughout the Old Testament is whoever "oppresses" the poor brings reproach on their Creator (cf. Proverbs 14:31; 22:16). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Be content** (714)(**arkeo**) means to be enough, to be sufficient or to be adequate with the implication of leading to satisfaction. In the passive sense **arkeo** means to be satisfied or contented with something. Jesus said His grace was **'sufficient'** (**arkeo**) in 2 Cor 12:9+. We see the secret of being content in Hebrews 13:5+ "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, **being content** (**arkeo**) with what you have; for ([term of explanation](#) - explains why/how we can be content with whatever we possess temporarily now on earth, for we have a permanent "Heavenly Possession!") He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU."

**Wages** (3800)(**opsonion**) literally was a military technical term for what is appointed to soldiers to buy food ration (money), allowance, pay; more generally (subsistence) pay, wages, expense money (Lk 3:14; 1 Co 9:7) metaphorically, as pay for serving as a Christian soldier money to live on (2Co 11:8). Figuratively, **opsonion** describes the compensation for serving sin (Ro 6:23). **Vincent** says **opsonion** is from *opson*, *cooked meat*, and later, generally, *provisions*. At Athens, especially, *fish*. Compare *opsarion*, *fish*, John 21:9, 10, 13. Hence **opsonion** is primarily *provision-money*, and so used of supplies and pay for an army. With this understanding the use of the word at Romans 6:23, "*the wages of sin*," becomes highly suggestive.

**Luke 3:15** Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to



- **State of expectation:** John 10:24
- **Were wondering:** John 1:19-28 John 3:28,29
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 4](#) - John MacArthur

## MESSIANIC SPECULATIONS WERE IN THE AIR!

**Now while the people were in a state of expectation**([prosdokao](#) - present tense - continually filled with anticipation) **and all were wondering** ([dialogizomai](#) - present tense - continually reasoning) **in their hearts** ([kardia](#)) **about John, as to whether he was the Christ** ([Christos](#) - the "Anointed One" - Messiah) - Although John did no signs clearly his Spirit filled preaching had an impact on the people to the point that they thought he might even be the Messiah. The gospel of John records

This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he \*said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

[Robertson](#) - John wrought no miracles and was not in David's line and **yet he moved people so mightily** (O for such mighty men of God in our day in post-Christian America!) that they began to suspect that he himself (autos) was the Messiah. The Sanhedrin will one day send a formal committee to ask him this direct question (John 1:19).

**In their hearts** ([kardia](#)) - Not just intellectually but in their innermost being. The preaching of John stirred the embers deep inside the Jews that God would send them the Messiah, which is as it should be for John had been miraculously conceived in order to be the forerunner of the Messiah.

**Whether he was the Christ** - Whether John was the **Messiah** (cf John 1:19-28, John 3:28,29), something he denied.

John 1:19-28+ This is the testimony of John (THE BAPTIST), when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20A nd he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "**I am not the Christ.**" 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he \*said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, '**MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,**' (Lk 3:4+) as Isaiah the prophet said." 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 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.

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**A state of expectation** (continually in this state - [present tense](#) as in Lk 1:21+) (4328)([prosdokao](#) from **prós** = towards - adds the idea of "mental direction" to the already existing meaning of the verb + **dokáo** = look for denoting direction of one's mind toward something) means literally to look forward toward, to wait for, to look for, to anticipate. It means to give thought to something that is in the future and the context indicates whether one does this looking/waiting in a hopeful sense, with a longing, with fear (wait with anxiety, live in suspense), or in a neutral state of mind. It describes the attitude saints should have as anticipating, waiting with watchfulness, being in expectation.

Prosdokao - 14v - expect(2), expecting(2), look(4), looking(2), state of expectation(1), waited(1), waiting(2), watching(1). Matt. 11:3; Matt. 24:50; Lk. 1:21; Lk. 3:15; Lk. 7:19; Lk. 7:20; Lk. 8:40; Lk. 12:46; Acts 3:5; Acts 27:33; Acts 28:6; 2 Pet. 3:12; 2 Pet. 3:13; 2 Pet. 3:14

**Were wondering** ([present tense](#), = continually pondering, cf Lk 1:29+) (1260)([dialogizomai](#) from **dia** = intensifies meaning + [logizomai](#) - to reason, reckon, consider. Related to our English word "[dialogue](#)" a conversation between two or more people) means to consider, reason or reckon thoroughly, to think through, to [deliberate](#) by reflection. "To bring together different reasons." (Vine)

This same verb [dialogizomai](#) is used to describe the scribes and Pharisees who were wondering who Jesus was, thinking that He had just blasphemed by offering forgiveness. (Lk 5:21-22+).

**Dialogizomai** - 15v - discuss(4), discussing(1), pondering(1), reason(1), reasoned(1), reasoning(7), wondering(1). Matt. 16:7; Matt. 16:8; Matt. 21:25; Mk. 2:6; Mk. 2:8; Mk. 8:16; Mk. 8:17; Mk. 9:33; Mk. 11:31; Lk. 1:29; Lk. 3:15; Lk. 5:21; Lk. 5:22; Lk. 12:17; Lk. 20:14

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**Kent Hughes** - Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones ([you can listen to 100's of his sermons](#)), arguably the most powerful preacher of the twentieth century, once described the stunning personal experience of the Holy Spirit's empowering his preaching on an unforgettable occasion: "*Never, do I think, have I been so conscious of the Power of the Word and the Gale of the Spirit. It is exceedingly difficult to go on living after such an experience, especially difficult to go on preaching.*" Lloyd-Jones described what all true preachers know: it is one thing to preach the Word—it is quite another to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit. And those who heard and knew the Doctor do not doubt a word of his testimony. His grandson, Christopher Catherwood, writes:

The one thing he prayed for, the one thing he relied on, the one thing he waited for and the one thing above all else and beyond most other preachers of his generation which thousands felt under his preaching was the unction, or anointing, of the Holy Spirit.[107]

A preacher acquaintance told me of visiting London and attending Westminster Chapel where he sat under the Doctor's mighty ministry. As he listened, he was so elevated in the contemplation of spiritual things that he was momentarily unaware that Lloyd-Jones had finished preaching!

This, of course, is something of what the hearers of John the Baptist experienced, perhaps to an even greater degree because John was filled with the Spirit before birth, groomed by the Spirit for thirty years, and then launched by the Spirit to prepare the way for the Lord. In Jesus' own words, there was no one greater than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28; Matthew 11:11).

We need to keep this in mind when we read his preaching (for example, in Luke 3:7-14) because his great eschatological and ethical challenges were delivered in the mighty rush of the Holy Spirit's power. John almost surely felt it difficult to go on living after such an experience, as did some of his thousands of hearers who were cut to the quick and came to passionate repentance.

Because of this we should not be surprised when we read in Luke 3:15 that "the people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ." We must remember that their messianic expectations were hazy. All John's hearers knew was that they were looking for an anointed agent of the Lord who would bring about the restoration of Israel and the triumph of God's dominion. They did not know, for example, that the Messiah's name would be Jesus. So even though John was announcing the Messiah's coming, it is not surprising that they wondered if John was the Christ. (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Luke 3:16 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**

- **I baptize:** Mt 3:11 Mk 1:7,8 Joh 1:26,33 Ac 1:5 11:16 13:24,25 19:4,5
- **He shall baptize:** Pr 1:23 Isa 32:15 44:3,4 Eze 36:25 Joe 2:28,29 Joh 7:38 Ac 2:33 10:44 11:15 1Co 12:13
- **With:** Isa 4:4 Zec 13:9 Mal 3:2,3 Ac 2:3,4,17,18
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 4](#) - John MacArthur

#### Parallel passages -

Matt 3:11-12+; "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** 12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Mark 1:7-8+ And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 "I baptized you with water; but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**"

## A MIGHTIER ONE IS COMING

**John answered and said to them all** - He is refuting their thought that he might be the Messiah. His answer makes it clear to the crowd that his message is not the final One, but that He is preparing the way for the One mightier than he Who would come onto the scene in about 6 months.

**As for me, I baptize (baptizo) you with water; but One is coming who is mightier (ischuros) than I** - "John could only drench them externally with water; but One was coming that could drench them internally with the Spirit. In water baptism every part of your body is completely soaked. Thus when we are baptized/immersed into the body of Christ at salvation we are drenched head-to-toe with Him." (Bell)

**I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals** (cf John 1:27+) - To **untie the thong** was a task for a slave, so John emphasizes his inferiority compared to the Messiah. This is the first direct mention of Jesus by John. John's baptism was minor compared to what was coming from Jesus. The rabbis taught that a disciple should do everything for their master except untie their sandals. That was considered too humiliating to demand. To the Jews this was the lowliest of tasks. And yet as a manifestation of his genuine humility, John said that he was not even worthy to do what Jews consider unworthy. Imagine the reaction of his Jewish audience!

**Guzik** comments that "John had many reasons to be proud, yet he was humble. He had a miraculous birth, a prophesied destiny, a man called to personally fulfill great prophetic promises, a powerful preacher, and a man with a great following.. "What was the reason, think you, of John's always retaining his proper position? Was it not because he had a high idea of his Master, and a deep reverence for him? Ah, brethren, because of our little estimate of Christ, it is often unsafe for the Lord to trust us in any but the very lowest positions." (Spurgeon). John was both strict and humble. That is an all-too-rare combination." (Enduring Word - Luke)

**ILLUSTRATION** - I once heard E. V. Hill, the pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, tell of the ministry of an elderly woman in his church whom they all called 1800 because no one knew how old she was. 1800 was hard on unsuspecting preachers because she would sit in the front row, and as soon as the preacher began she would say, "Get him up!" (referring to Christ). After a few minutes, if she did not think there was enough of Christ in the sermon, she would again shout, "Get him up!" If a preacher did not "Get him up!" he was in for a long, hard day! Here John the Baptist's response to misplaced adulation was to "get him up"—a noble task because it is the chief purpose for our existence....John was the greatest of all men, he was having the greatest of all ministries to date, multitudes were at his feet, but he knew that he wasn't worthy to perform even the humblest act for Christ. If we aim to "get him up," we need to "get ourselves down." (K. Hughes)

**He will baptize (baptizo) you with the Holy Spirit**- Notice that here John functions as a prophet giving a prophecy which summarizes the ministry of Jesus. See commentary describing the fulfillment of this in Acts 2:1-4. John baptized them in the Jordan River symbolizing their outward confession of repentance. One can be water-baptized without being baptized with the Holy Spirit, and vice versa. Thus John's baptism would only be external if it were not accompanied by heart change. The Messiah's baptism however would be mightier, the result of supernatural power which could only be performed by God. Messiah's "baptism" would be internal, for when one entered the New Covenant in Messiah's blood (Lk 22:20+), they would receive the gift of the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit (see Paul below). This had been promised to the Jews in the OT in Ezekiel in the context of the New Covenant in which God declared "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes (NOTE GOD'S PROVISION), and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY WHICH IS ONLY POSSIBLE AS ONE RELIES WHOLLY ON THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT). (Ezekiel 36:27+)

**He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (pur)** - While the interpretation of this passage is controversial, the context would clearly indicate the **fire** of judgment (something John has already alluded to in the preceding context - "wrath to come" - Lk 3:7). John was only a man could not send anyone into judgment, for that authority belongs only to Jesus "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son." (Jn 5:22) Not all writers agree that **fire** here refers to judgement, even though clearly fire refers to judgement in the immediate context (Lk 3:17). Those who see only one baptism (D A Carson in comments on Mt 3:11), take the **fire** as a purifying agent. One of the main arguments to support this premise is that there is only one preposition **with** (Greek = en) before Spirit and fire. In other words there is no separate "with" before fire, which as Carson says "suggests a unified concept, Spirit-fire or the like."

**Fire** is used repeatedly in both testaments to describe future judgment -

**Old Testament** - Isa. 29:6; 30:33; 31:9; 66:15-16; Ezek. 38:22; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8, Malachi 3:1, 2, Mal 4:2

**New Testament** - Mt. 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8; 25:41; Lk 9:54; 12:49; 17:29; Jn 15:6; 2 Th. 1:7; Heb 10:27; 2

**Criswell:** The reference to baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire is understood by some to refer to one act, that of purification by the Holy Spirit as the fire burns away impurity. Others understand two acts: baptism with the Holy Spirit for those who are saved, and baptism with fire for those who are damned. The context suggest two acts. ([The Believer's Study Bible](#))

**John MacArthur** on **Holy Spirit and fire** ([pur](#)) says "Many interpreters take this (**and fire**) to be a part of the **Holy Spirit baptism**, which began at Pentecost and which in that instance was accompanied by "**tongues of fire**" (Acts 2:3+). But the Acts account says that those tongues "appeared to them" (that is, the waiting disciples) "**as of fire**." They were not fire, but looked like licks of fire. In his last promise of the soon-coming baptism with the Holy Spirit, Jesus said nothing about actual fire being a part of the experience (Acts 1:5+). And when, a short time later, Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit, no fire was present (Acts 10:44+; Acts 11:16+; cf. Acts 8:17+; Acts 19:6+). **Other interpreters take the fire to represent a spiritual cleansing** as described in the quotation above from Ezekiel. But nothing in Ezekiel's text, in the context of John's message here, or in the Pentecost reference to the tongues "as of fire" relates to such cleansing. Consequently, it seems best to consider **fire** as representing God's coming judgment, which, as we have seen, is so frequently in Scripture symbolized by fire. In both the preceding and following verses (Mt 3:10, 12+) John clearly uses fire to represent judgment and punishment. It is impossible that the middle reference to fire would concern an entirely different subject. Both of the adjoining verses contrast the fates of believers and unbelievers, those who bear good fruit and those who do not (Mt 3:10) and the valuable wheat and the worthless chaff (Mt 3:12+). It therefore seems logical and natural to take Mt 3:11 also as a contrast between believers (those baptized with the Holy Spirit) and unbelievers (those baptized with the fire of God's judgment). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

**J Vernon McGee** - John baptized with water. Jesus has been baptizing with the **Holy Spirit** for over nineteen hundred years now. He shall also baptize with **fire** at His [Second Coming](#). **Fire** speaks of judgment. Some folk think that this is a reference to the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, and there was the appearance of fire on the heads of those assembled. However, it is important to notice that in Acts 2:3+ it was "*...like as of fire...*" (italics mine) -- it was not fire. The coming of the Holy Spirit was not the fulfillment of the baptism of fire. That will take place at the [Second Coming](#) of our Lord. (See [Thru the Bible](#))

**Ryrie** agrees with **Criswell**, **MacArthur** and **McGee** - The baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost, whereas the baptism with fire refers to the judgments accompanying the Second coming of Christ. (Borrow the [Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition](#))

**Darrell Bock** writes "*The Holy Spirit and fire*, then, represent two integral aspects of Jesus' ministry. He comes to gather and to divide (Lk 12:49-53+; Lk 17:29-30+). The offer of the Spirit must be received. Those who respond are purged and taken in, while those who reject are tossed away like chaff, as verse 17 suggests. ([IVP Commentary](#))

**Kent Hughes** applies **baptism with the Spirit and fire** to believers reasoning that "**Fire** represents the Spirit's ongoing work of purification and cleansing." (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Steven Cole** has an interesting note - How should we interpret this baptism of the Spirit and fire? There are several views. There is only one preposition ("with," Greek, *en*) governing the two words (the NIV is incorrect in repeating "with"), so that it refers to one baptism. Thus it seems to me that this baptism must apply to one group, those who respond to the gospel. The Holy Spirit regenerates these people and progressively purges them from their sins by His purifying fire. The unquenchable fire of verse 17 refers to the eternal punishment of those who reject the gospel. Alexander Maclaren (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], Luke, p. 76) explains it this way, "Either we shall gladly accept the purging fire of the Spirit which burns sin out of us, or we shall have to meet the punitive fire which burns up us and our sins together. To be cleansed by the one or to be consumed by the other is the choice before each of us." ([Pointing People to Christ Luke 3:15-22](#))

**Jon Courson** - John preached a message of severity in order that Jesus might come and present a message of serenity. John called for holiness in order that Jesus could give a message of hopefulness. John shone a convicting light in order that Jesus might share comforting love. In other words, John embodied the purpose of the law by showing people they were sinners in need of a Savior. (See [Jon Courson's Application Commentary](#))

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**Mightier** (2478) (**ischuros** from **ischuo** = to be able) is an adjective which means strong, powerful, mighty (usually referring to inherent physical strength), able, forcible. **ischuros** denotes places "stress on the actual power that one possesses rather than on the mere principle of power." It is notable that **ischuros** is used in the Septuagint to refer to God in Jer 32:18+ which says "O great and **mighty** (Lxx = ischuros) God. The LORD of hosts is His name." And in Jeremiah 33:3+ He invites Israel to "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and **mighty** (Lxx = ischuros) things, which you do not know."

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I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming. —Luke 3:16

Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants, appeared in more than 800 television commercials. He offered his homespun humor and "old-fashioned hamburgers" to a worldwide audience. Viewers saw him as friendly, funny, believable, and caring. In spite of his popularity, though, Thomas always said he was "the messenger, not the message."

That's a good word to remember as we speak about Christ to our friends and family. While our behavior should always be consistent with what we say, our goal is to point others to Jesus and not to ourselves. The apostle Paul said, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bond servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

John the Baptist knew that his role was to be a messenger for Christ. When people flocked to hear John preach, and to be baptized as a sign of their repentance, many wondered if he was the promised Messiah. John told them, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (Luke 3:16).

Through our words and actions, we testify of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We are His messengers, but He is the message.

- **FOR FURTHER STUDY** [How Can I Break The Silence?](#)

**We witness best for Christ  
when we say the least about ourselves.**

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Luke 3:17 "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.**

- **Winnowing** fork: Jer 15:7 Mt 3:12
- **Will thoroughly**: Mic 4:12 Mt 13:30
- **But He will burn up**: Ps 1:4 21:9,10 Mk 9:43-49
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 3](#) - John MacArthur
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WINNOWERING THE GRAIN

## SEPARATION OF RIGHTEOUS FROM THE WICKED

John uses an agricultural metaphor to present to his hearers an unshakable, unmistakable and unforgettable picture of **separation**. First the harvested stalks of wheat would be threshed by oxen dragging heavy timbers over the grain which would result in separation of the chaff ([pix](#)) from the kernels of wheat ([pix](#)). This combination would then be **winnowed**. **Winnowing** is the act of separating grain from chaff by throwing it in the air allowing the prevalent breezes off of the Mediterranean Sea to carry away the useless, lighter husks (chaff) and allowing the heavier, valuable wheat to fall to the ground. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain. Winnow in our English dictionary means to remove from a group until only the best are left. Interesting! In Biblical terms only the "best ones" are only those who are **in Christ**. In this agricultural land, John's picture left no one guessing what he was saying. They knew he was describing a separation and it was not of literal wheat but of human beings!

**His winnowing fork** ([ptuon](#)) **is in His hand to thoroughly clear** ([diakathairo](#)) **His threshing floor** ([halon](#)) - **His...His...He** refer to Jesus Christ. **Thoroughly clear** ([diakathairo](#) - only use) indicates that this purging or separation is absolute and complete and there will not be a few "husks" of unbelievers (so to speak) on the threshing floor mixed in with the valuable, believing "wheat"! How sad that people created in the image of God will end their life on earth as nothing more than "chaff" to be burned and tormented forever and ever, regardless of how powerful they were, how many degrees they had after their name, how many humanitarian causes they established, how many books they wrote, etc, etc. Outside of Christ, they are eternally worthless chaff! **Woe!** John presents a vivid picture of the future judgment of Messiah Who will leave not a trace of **chaff** (cf Ps 1:4+). His separation (**winnowing**) of the **the wheat** (repenters) from **the chaff** (non-repenters) is thorough and final as the chaff will be thrown into the **Lake of fire and brimstone** (Rev 20:15+). Even in the Old Testament we see a description of the thoroughness of the removal of the chaff by the

Messiah as recorded in the book of Daniel...

"You (DANIEL SPEAKING TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR) continued looking until a **Stone** was cut out without hands (= SUPERNATURAL = MESSIAH AT HIS SECOND COMING), and **IT struck** (SEPTUAGINT = [PATASSO](#) = SAME VERB IN Rev 19:15! THIS IS NOT A COINCIDENCE!) the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold (ALL ELEMENTS OF THE GODLESS GENTILE NATIONS) were crushed all at the same time (BY THE **STONE** THE MESSIAH AT HIS SECOND COMING!) and **became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found.** (CF "HE WILL THOROUGHLY CLEAR HIS THRESHING FLOOR!") But the **Stone** that **struck** (SEPTUAGINT = [PATASSO](#)) the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS [MESSIANIC KINGDOM](#)). (Daniel 2:34-35+)

Compare John's description in the Revelation - From His (JESUS') mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it **He may strike down the nations** (**STRIKE** IS SAME VERB [PATASSO](#) USED IN DANIEL 2), and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev 19:15-16+)

Isaiah 63:4+ "For the day of vengeance (UNBELIEVING "[CHAFF](#)") was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come (BELIEVING "WHEAT" - in this context of Isaiah 63:1-6 referring the [believing remnant of Israel](#)). Daniel 12:2+ speaks of this time of future separation of the wicked from the redeemed.

**Marvin Vincent on winnowing** - The picture is of a farmer at his threshing-floor, the area of hard-beaten earth on which the sheaves are spread and the grain trodden out by animals. His fan, that is his winnowing-shovel or fork, is in his hand, and with it he throws up the mingled wheat and chaff against the wind in order to separate the grain....The whole metaphor represents the Messiah as separating the evil from the good, according to the tests of his kingdom and Gospel, receiving the worthy into his kingdom and consigning the unworthy to destruction (compare Mt. 13:30; 39-43; 48-50).

**And to gather ([sunago](#)) the wheat into His barn** - The "**wheat**" pictures believers who bring forth the eternal fruit (cf Jn 15:16) of [Good Deeds](#).

**But** (sad, somber contrast) **He will burn up ([katakaio](#)) the chaff ([achuron](#)) with unquenchable ([asbestos](#)) fire ([pur](#))** - A frightening but accurate description of eternal hell (cf. Isa. 66:24; Mt. 18:8; 25:41, 46; Rev 14:10-11+). Jesus warned "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the **unquenchable** fire." (Mark 9:43+)

**John MacArthur** - John's powerful call for true repentance is just as relevant and needed today as when he first gave it. It is the duty of every true preacher of God's Word to warn his hearers of the danger of false, shallow, non-saving repentance; repentance that is grounded in selfish regret over sin's consequences instead of a desire to be delivered from sin, fails to subdue the love of sin and initiate a passion for holiness, leads to further sin in a hypocritical attempt to maintain the facade of self-righteousness, produces self-deception, leads to a deadly false security, and ultimately hardens the heart, and sears the conscience.

The picture in this passage reminds one of the eternal "separation" of the righteous from the wicked in Psalm 1...

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

4 The **wicked** are not so, But **they are like [chaff](#) which the wind drives away.**

5 Therefore the **wicked** will not stand in the judgment, Nor **sinners** in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the **wicked** will perish. (Ps 1:1-6+)

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**Winnowing fork** ([4425](#))([ptuon](#)) denotes "a winnowing shovel or fan," with which grain is thrown up against the wind, in order to separate the chaff (Mt 3:12 ; Lk 3:17). [Winnowing - Wikipedia](#)

**Winnowing fork** (KJV = "fan") - A long wooden shovel used for tossing grain against the wind after [threshing](#) so that the lighter [chaff](#) would be blown away, leaving the [kernels](#) to settle in a pile. Shovels were also used for this purpose (Isaiah 30:24). Winnowing is a frequent figure for the Divine sifting and chastisement, Jer 4:11; Jer 15:7 etc. [NET Note](#) - A winnowing fork is a pitchfork-like tool used to toss threshed grain in the air so that the wind blows away the chaff, leaving the grain to fall to the ground. The note of

purging is highlighted by the use of imagery involving sifting through threshed grain for the useful kernels.

**Thoroughly clear** (1245)(diakathairo from **dia** = through + **kathairo** = cleanse) to cleanse thoroughly. As thoroughly separating chaff from grain on a threshing floor clean thoroughly; used metaphorically in Lk 3:17 (only use) **BDAG** - to make free of something unwanted, thoroughly purge, clean out.

**Gilbrant** - The prefix **dia**, which often intensifies the verb, adds the expression “thoroughly” to the root verb **kathairō**, meaning “to cleanse.” It is found in Aristotle, Plato, and other early writers, although it does not appear in the Septuagint. This verb appears twice in the New Testament as variants to the Textus Receptus. Both instances describe how John the Baptist spoke of the coming Messiah as One who would thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, removing all the chaff (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Threshing floor** (257)(halon from **halos** = a threshing floor) threshing floor; by metonymy threshed grain lying on the threshing floor waiting to be winnowed; metaphorically in MT 3:12 and LU 3:17 of Christ's work of saving and judging. A threshing-floor (as rolled hard), i.e. (figurative) the grain (and chaff, as just threshed)

**Gilbrant** - Halōn is a noun that is related to the verb aloaō, which means “thresh.” In the ancient world a threshing floor was often a hard place in an open field where grain was piled.

Uses in the Septuagint - Gen. 50:10; Gen. 50:11; Exod. 22:6; Exod. 22:29; Deut. 16:13; Jdg. 6:37; Jdg. 15:5; Ruth 3:2; Ruth 3:14; 2 Sam. 24:18; 2 Sam. 24:21; 2 Sam. 24:24; 2 Ki. 6:27; 1 Chr. 13:9; Job 5:26; Job 39:12; Isa. 25:10; Jer. 51:33; Dan. 2:35; Hos. 9:1; Hos. 9:2; Hos. 13:3; Joel 2:24; Mic. 4:12; Zeph. 2:9;

**Gather** (4863)(**sunago** from **sun** = with + **ago** = to lead, ) means literally to lead together. To gather (in) or gather (up) (Mt 13:47; 25:24, 26; Lk 3:17; 15:13; Jn 6:12f; 15:6). To bring or call together, gather (Mt 22:10; 25:32; Mk 2:2; 7:1; Jn 11:47; 18:2; Acts 13:44; 14:27; 1 Cor 5:4). To invite or receive as a guest (Mt 25:35, 38, 43). This verb gives us our English word [synagogue](#) a place where Jews pray and worship. We see a gathering for judgment similar to Lk 3:17 in Joel 3:11+ where God is commanding a gathering of unholy Gentiles, not for the purpose of worship, but for wrath! In the [Valley of Jehoshaphat](#), the Valley of Decision, for it is judgment time for the nations of the world is "ripe!"

**Friberg's** summary of **sunago** - (1) of things; (a) gather in, gather up, collect (Mt 13.47), opposite skorpizo (scatter) and merizo (distribute, divide out); (b) store, keep safe (Lk 12.17); (c) turn into cash, convert into money (Lk 15.13);(2) of persons; (a) bring or call together, assemble (Mt 22.10); (b) as showing hospitality take in, invite in (Mt 25.35); (c) passive assemble, come together, be gathered together (Mt 18.20)

**Gilbrant** on **sunago** - **Sunagō** is a common word occurring in **classical Greek** from the time of Homer (ca. Eighth Century B.C.). In classical usage it usually conveys the meaning of “to gather together” persons or things for any of several reasons: worship, deliberation, festivity, battle, work, hospitality, or reconciliation (Liddell-Scott). The nonliterary papyri offer an illustration of sunagō in relationship to money or goods. “The verb is frequently used of the total amount, the full sum, received by sale or by purchase” (Moulton-Milligan). For example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) it is possible that the “prodigal converted his goods into money, sold all off and realized their full value, rather than that he ‘gathered all together’ to take with him” (ibid.). **Sunagō** occurs about 350 times in the **Septuagint** and translates 50 different Hebrew words, the most frequent being ‘āšaph, “gather,” and qāvats, “assemble.” One can divide **New Testament occurrences** into two general categories: gathering things and gathering persons (Bauer). Matthew uses sunagō for the “assembling” of the religious leaders, usually against Jesus (Mt 26:3,57); for the “gathering together” of people which came to hear Jesus (Mt 13:2); and a cryptic reference to “gathering together” of birds of prey (Mt 24:28). An interesting reference to the classical usage as “hospitality” occurs in the Olivet discourse: “I was a stranger, and ye took me in,” that is, you showed Me hospitality (Mt 25:35,38,43). Mark always uses sunagō for the “gathering together” of people: crowds, apostles, or Pharisees (2:2; 4:1; 5:21; 6:30; 7:1). Luke and John also use the word with the two basic ideas of “gathering people and things.” Luke 15:13 is the only exception (see reference to Moulton-Milligan above). Beginning with Acts 4:31 Luke used the word exclusively to denote the assembly of the Church (Acts 4:31; 11:26; 13:44; 14:27) as did Paul in his only reference to the word (1 Corinthians 5:4). The Book of Revelation employs sunagō to indicate the “gathering together” for the purpose of war (13:10; 16:14,16; 19:19; 20:8) and the assembling of the birds for the great supper of God (19:17). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Sunago** - 59x in 59v - assemble(1), assembled(5), came together(1), convened(1), gather(10), gather...together(2), gather together(1), gathered(9), gathered...together(3), gathered together(14), gathered...together(1), gathering(3), gathering together(1), invite(2), invited(1), met(2), store(2).

Matt. 2:4; Matt. 3:12; Matt. 6:26; Matt. 12:30; Matt. 13:2; Matt. 13:30; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 18:20; Matt. 22:10;

Matt. 22:34; Matt. 22:41; Matt. 24:28; Matt. 25:24; Matt. 25:26; Matt. 25:32; Matt. 25:35; Matt. 25:38; Matt. 25:43; Matt. 26:3; Matt. 26:57; Matt. 27:17; Matt. 27:27; Matt. 27:62; Matt. 28:12; Mk. 2:2; Mk. 4:1; Mk. 5:21; Mk. 6:30; Mk. 7:1; Lk. 3:17; Lk. 11:23; Lk. 12:17; Lk. 12:18; Lk. 15:13; Lk. 22:66; Jn. 4:36; Jn. 6:12; Jn. 6:13; Jn. 11:47; Jn. 11:52; Jn. 15:6; Jn. 18:2; Acts 4:5; Acts 4:26; Acts 4:27; Acts 4:31; Acts 11:26; Acts 13:44; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:30; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:8; 1 Co. 5:4; Rev. 16:14; Rev. 16:16; Rev. 19:17; Rev. 19:19; Rev. 20:8

**Sunago** - 370x in 349v in the Septuagint - Gen. 1:9; 6:21; 29:3,7-8,22; 34:30; 37:35; 41:35,48-49; 47:14; 49:1; Exod. 3:16; 4:29; 5:7,12; 8:14; 9:19-20; 16:5,16; 23:10; Lev. 25:3,20; Num. 1:18; 8:9; 10:3,7; 11:16,22,24,32; 19:9-10; 21:16,23; Deut. 13:16; 16:13; 19:5; 22:2; 30:3-4; 32:23,34; 33:5,21; Jos. 2:18; 7:14; 10:6; 24:1; Jdg. 3:13; 6:33; 7:22; 9:6,47; 10:17; 11:20; 12:1; 16:23; 19:15,18; 20:11,14; Ruth 2:2,7; 1 Sam. 5:8,11; 7:6; 13:5,11; 14:19,52; 17:1-2; 22:2; 2 Sam. 3:34; 6:1; 10:15-17; 11:27; 12:28-29; 14:14; 17:11,13; 21:13; 23:9,11; 1 Ki. 7:23; 12:24; 2 Ki. 22:4,20; 23:1; 1 Chr. 11:13; 13:2; 15:4; 19:7,17; 22:2; 23:2; 2 Chr. 1:14; 2:2,17; 10:6; 11:13; 12:5; 13:7; 15:10; 18:5; 20:4; 23:2; 24:5,11; 25:5; 29:15,20; 30:3,13; 32:4,6; 34:9,29; Ezr. 3:1; 7:28; 8:15,20; 9:4; 10:1,9; Neh. 1:9; 4:8,20; 5:16; 6:2,10; 7:5; 8:1,13; 9:1; 12:25,28,44; 13:11; Est. 2:8; 9:15-16,18; Job 5:5; 20:15; 27:16; Ps. 2:2; 16:4; 33:7; 35:15; 39:6; 41:6; 47:9; 48:4; 50:5; 102:22; 104:22; 107:3; Prov. 9:12; 10:10; 11:24; 13:11; 27:25; 28:8; 30:4; 31:14; Eccl. 2:8,26; 3:5; Isa. 11:12; 13:4,14-15; 17:5; 18:6; 23:18; 24:22; 27:12; 28:20; 29:1,7; 33:4; 34:16; 35:10; 39:6; 40:11; 43:5,9; 44:11; 45:20; 48:14; 49:5,18; 56:8; 60:4,7,22; 62:9; 66:18; Jer. 3:17; 4:5; 7:21; 8:13-15; 9:22; 10:17; 12:9; 17:11; 23:8; 30:21; 31:8,10; 32:37; 40:10,12,15; 49:5,14; 50:7; 51:44; Ezek. 11:17; 13:5; 16:31,37; 22:20; 28:25; 29:5,13; 34:13; 37:21; 38:4,7-8,12-13; 39:2,17,27; Dan. 3:2-3,27; 6:23; 11:10,13,34,40; 12:12; Hos. 1:11; 10:10; Joel 1:14; 2:16; 3:2,11; Amos 3:9; Mic. 1:7; 2:12; 4:6,12; 5:7; 7:1; Hab. 1:9,15; 2:16; Zeph. 2:1; 3:18; Hag. 1:6; Zech. 2:6; 9:3; 14:14

**Sunago** is used in Micah 4

Micah 4:6-7+ In that day," declares the LORD, "I will assemble the lame And gather the outcasts, Even those whom I have afflicted. 7"I will make the lame a remnant And the outcasts a strong nation, And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever.

**Sunago** is used in Zeph 3 to describe God's gathering and restoration of the nation of Israel...

Zeph 3:17-18+ "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. 18 "I will gather (Lxx = sunago) those who grieve about the appointed feasts— They came from you, O Zion; The reproach of exile is a burden on them.

**Will burn up** (2618) (**katakaiō** from **kata** = intensifies meaning of verb + **kaio** = to burn) means to burn up, to consume or destroy by fire. The word denotes a violent consuming heat. It means to burn utterly as of chaff (Mt 3:17, Lk 3:17), tares (Mt 13:30,40), magic paraphernalia after citizens of Ephesus had been saved (Acts 19:19), works believers do in their own strength, for their own glory (1 Cor 3:15), earth (here in 2 Pe 3:10), trees and grass (Rev 8:7), the rebuilt city of Babylon (Re 17:16+, Re 18:8+)

**Chaff** (892) (**achuron**) refers to the husks and refuse of wheat separated by treading the grain followed by winnowing. This **chaff** (Wikipedia) or straw was used by the Egyptians to make bricks (with Jewish labor - Ex 5:7, 10-13). Chaff (straw) was also used as fodder and notably, from the Ptolemaic period on, as fuel for fires. In the Lxx of Da 2:35 **achuron** describes what happens to the godless world kingdoms that become "like chaff" when the King returns as the "Stone" which crushes Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

**Achuron** - 21x in 20v in the Septuagint - Ge. 24:25; 24:32; Ex. 5:7; 5:10; 5:11; 5:12; 5:13; 5:16; Exod. 5:18; Jdg. 19:19; 1 Ki. 4:27; Job 21:18; Job 41:27; Isa. 11:7; Isa. 17:13; Isa. 30:24; Isa. 65:25; Jer. 23:28; Dan. 2:35; Nah. 3:14;

**Unquenchable** (762) (**asbestos** from **a** = without + **sbennumi** = to quench) means literally not extinguished, thus not able to be quenched. Asbestos is used only in Mt 3:12, Mk 9:43 (KJV also has Mk 9:45) and Lk 3:17 with no uses in the Septuagint.

### Luke 3:18 So with many other exhortations he preached the Gospel to the people

- John 1:15,29,34 3:29-36 Acts 2:40
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur



## SUMMARIZED

So with many other exhortations ([parakaleo](#)) he preached the Gospel ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) - imperfect tense - again and again) to the people Luke 3 gives us only a very brief summary of John's ministry, which he then succinctly summarizes in Luke 3:18-20. Luke will mention John again in Lk 7:18-20, but for the most part John fades from view and Jesus takes center stage beginning with His baptism in Lk 3:21-22. John's ministry had preceded the inception of Jesus' ministry by about 6 months and overlapped (albeit "in the limelight") for the first 6 months of Jesus' ministry. John's ministry ends with his imprisonment and beheading by Herod Antipas (see Lk 3: 19-20).

How effective was John's picturesque teaching? The gospel of John gives us a sense of the effect of John's ministry of preparation for the Messiah writing

And He (JESUS) went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 **Many believed in Him there.**" (John 10:40-42)

**Comment:** John records several times that Jews believed in Jesus (John 2:23+ John 4:39,41+ John 8:30 John 11:45 John 12:42) but studying the context of these passages it is clear that not all who **believed** really believed! In other words they had a superficial belief or intellectual belief but it was unassociated with a change in behavior and thus was a false profession. On the other hand, clearly some truly believed in Jesus, but it is difficult to arrive at a sense of how many of those who "**believed**" were genuine. We will have to wait for Heaven for the answer.

**MacArthur** says John's "**exhortations** exposed the wickedness of their hearts, condemned their reliance on ritual and their Abrahamic heritage for salvation, and warned them that they would face God's wrath and judgment if they did not truly and evidently repent." (See context in [Luke Commentary](#))

**Robertson** on **with many other exhortations** - Luke has given a bare sample of the wonderful messages of the Baptist. Few as his words preserved are they give a definite and powerful conception of his preaching.

**Darrell Bock** writes that "John illustrates how the proclaimer of the Word should perform his task. The preacher must bear good news as well as news that exposes sin. Some preachers in the past tended to emphasize sin so much that one wondered where grace might be found. Today our problem is the opposite: being able to confront people with their accountability and culpability before God." (See [Luke](#))

**To the people** - John was preaching the good news to the Jews. To the Jews first and then to the Gentiles, even as Paul wrote years later "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek (Gentiles)." (Ro 1:16+). In fact in the next verse we see that John did in fact preach to the Gentiles, specifically to the mixed Edomite/Samaritan Gentile Herod Antipas!

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**Exhortations** ([present tense](#) - continually exhorting) ([3870](#))([parakaleo](#) from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = call) means literally to call one alongside, to call someone to oneself, to call for, to summon. **Parakaleo** can include the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action and that would certainly be true in this context, where John had been exhorting the people regarding the need for genuine repentance manifest by good fruits.

**Parakaleo in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 3:18; Lk. 7:4; Lk. 8:31; Lk. 8:32; Lk. 8:41; Lk. 15:28; Lk. 16:25; Acts 2:40; Acts 8:31; Acts 9:38; Acts 11:23; Acts 13:42; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:32; Acts 16:9; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:39; Acts 16:40; Acts 19:31; Acts 20:1; Acts 20:2; Acts 20:12; Acts 21:12; Acts 24:4; Acts 25:2; Acts 27:33; Acts 27:34; Acts 28:14; Acts 28:20;

**Preached the Gospel** (the good news)([imperfect tense](#) - over and over, again and again)([2097](#))([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) in this context means to announce good news concerning the Son of God as proclaimed in the Gospel, calling on his hearers to repent and believe in Messiah and baptizing those who did so in preparation for the Messiah's coming.

**Euaggelizo** -52v - Matt. 11:5; Lk. 1:19; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 3:18; Lk. 4:18; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 7:22; Lk. 8:1; Lk. 9:6; Lk. 16:16; Lk. 20:1; Acts 5:42; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:25; Acts 8:35; Acts 8:40; Acts 10:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 13:32; Acts 14:7; Acts 14:15; Acts 14:21; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:18; Rom. 1:15; Rom. 10:15; Rom. 15:20; 1 Co. 1:17; 1 Co. 9:16; 1 Co. 9:18; 1 Co. 15:1; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 10:16; 2 Co. 11:7; Gal. 1:8; Gal. 1:9; Gal. 1:11; Gal. 1:16; Gal. 1:23; Gal. 4:13; Eph. 2:17; Eph. 3:8; 1 Thess. 3:6; Heb. 4:2; Heb. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1

**Luke 3:19 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**

- Pr 9:7,8 15:12 Mt 11:2 14:3,4 Mk 6:17,18
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JOHN'S SPIRIT ENABLED INDOMITABLE BOLDNESS

**But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded ([elegcho](#)) by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done ([poieo](#))** - John brought Herod Antipas' dark sins to the light which is the root sense of **reprimanded**. It can be costly to expose the darkness as it was in John's case. Proverbs 29:25 says "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted (ALTHOUGH HE MAY FIRST BE THROWN INTO PRISON AND MARTYRED!)" John the Baptist did not fear man but God. John was a man filled with the Spirit even in the womb (Lk 1:15+) and he lived his lived the same way, filled with the Spirit. How do we know? Because of His boldness! Throughout the book of Acts we see one of the effects ("fruits") of being empowered by (Acts 1:8+) the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit filled man or woman is emboldened to speak the truth. (See Acts 4:31+, cf Peter Mt 26:72 and Acts 2:14+ after being filled in Acts 2:4+, cf Paul in Acts 9:17+ with Acts 9:27, 28+, see also Acts 13:46+, Acts 14:3+, Acts 19:8+, cf Stephen Acts 6:3,5+ and Acts 7:55, 60+)

**Herod the tetrarch** - This refers to [Herod Antipas](#) ([see note](#)). Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great, and his long reign (4 B.C. to A.D. 39) encompassed the entire ministry of Jesus Christ. Don't confuse Herod Antipas with Herod described in the birth narratives in Mt 2:1-9 and Lk 1:5+, for these mentions refer to Herod the Great, the father of Herod Antipas. It is noteworthy that Herod Antipas was not a Jew because his father, Herod the Great, was an Idumean (Edomite) and his mother, Malthace, was a Samaritan. Clearly he was not greatly liked by the Jews. Excluding the mentions of Herod in Mt 2:1-9 and Lk 1:5, Herod Antipas is the "**Herod**" mentioned in the Gospels.

**Herod** - 40x in 39v - Mt. 2:1,3,7,12-13,15-16,19,22 (= **Herod the Great**) // Mt 14:1,3,6 (= **Herod Antipas**)  
Mk 6:14,16-18,20-22; 8:15 (= **Herod Antipas**) // Lk. 1:5 (= **Herod the Great**) // Luke 3:1,19; 9:7,9; 13:31;  
23:7-8,11-12,15 (= **Herod Antipas**); Acts 4:27; 12:1,6,11,19-21 (= **Herod Agrippa I**); Acts 13:1

**But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded ([elegcho](#)) by him** - As noted above Herod Antipas was a Gentile and not a Jew, so John clearly did not limit his proclamation of the Gospel to the Jew. Even his rebuke of Herod Antipas would be considered part of the Gospel, because one must first recognize their sinfulness (the bad news) so that they realize they have a desperate need to receive the Gospel (the good news). Surely John called him to repent of his sin to receive forgiveness of sins because that is what he had declared to the crowd in Luke 3:3.

**John MacArthur** says it this way - The gospel, keep this in mind, folks, the gospel is a message of repentance but it's a message of repentance for the — fill in the blank — forgiveness of sins (Lk 24:47+). And the most kind thing you could ever tell anybody is God will forgive all their sins if they will repent, right? That's the good news. This is not bad news, this is very good news. And while the truth is hard because it must expose sin, it is at the same time merciful because it brings forgiveness. And John directly reproved this man Herod. ([The Legacy of John the Baptist](#))

**MacArthur** on [Herodias his brother's wife](#) - Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus ([See family tree](#)), another son of Herod the Great; so when she married Philip, she was marrying her own father's brother. What precipitated the arrest of John the Baptist was that Herod Antipas (another of Herodias' uncles) talked Herodias into leaving her husband (his brother) in order to marry him (Mk 6:17)—thus compounding the incest, as well as violating Lev 18:16. John was outraged that a ruler in Israel would commit such a sin openly, so he rebuked Herod severely (Mt 14:4). For this, he was imprisoned and later killed (Mk 6:14-29). (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Criswell** on [Herodias his brother's wife](#) - Herod Antipas, on a visit to Rome, had met Herodias, the wife of his half brother Philip, who was a hostage there. Antipas persuaded his brother to divorce Herodias so that he might marry her, even though he himself was already married to the daughter of the king of Nabatea. This was a clear case of adultery. Luke tells about John's imprisonment (Luke 3:20) in order to round out the story, though the arrest comes later (cf. Mark 6:14-29). ([Believer's Study Bible](#))

**Ryrie** on [Herodias](#) - The former wife of Herod's half brother Philip, her uncle. She had been persuaded to leave her husband and marry Herod Antipas, thus committing incest (Lev. 18:16). John condemned him for this, and Antipas knew that John spoke the truth (see Mark 6:20). (Borrow the [Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition](#))

**Because** (term of explanation) **of all the wicked things (poneros) which Herod had done** - Herod had his capital city Tiberias built on the site of a Jewish cemetery, a site the Jews considered to be defiled which made it difficult to persuade them to live there. "Then, to make matters worse, he put up idols in public places and if there's anything we know about the Jews after they came out of Babylonian captivity, they were purged of any interest in idolatry and this was a great offense to them." (MacArthur)

- **Related Resource on Herod Antipas** - [See article in the Jewish Encyclopedia.](#)

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**Was reprimanded** ([present tense](#) = John continually exposed Herod's sin!) (1651) ([elegcho](#) means to **bring to the light** (to reveal hidden things) with the implication that there is adequate proof of wrongdoing. To expose, to convict, to reprove, to shame or disgrace and thus to **rebuke** another in such a way that they are compelled to see and to admit the error of their ways. To show someone that they have done something wrong and summon them to repent. As explained below Herod was clearly committing blatant sin including adultery and incest, and John addressed his sin with his characteristic Spirit filled boldness.

**Vincent** says **elegcho** "has several phases of meaning. In earlier classical Greek it signifies to disgrace or put to shame....Then, to cross-examine or question, for the purpose of convincing, convicting, or refuting; to censure, accuse."

**Wicked** (4190) ([poneros](#) from **poneo** = work or toil) means evil, wicked, base, bad, degenerate. **Poneros** denotes determined, aggressive, and fervent evil that actively opposes what is good. **Poneros** is not just bad in character (like kakos), but bad in effect (injurious)! In short, **poneros** describes evil in active opposition to good, viciously evil in its influence and actively harmful. **Poneros** is used to describe [Satan](#) (ho poneros = "the Evil [one]"), the god of this age, who is corrupting man and dragging him to destruction originally prepared for himself (Mt 25:41). And so it is fitting that **Herod Antipas** would be described with the same adjective as the devil, for he acted like the devil! Poneros denotes someone who is not content in being corrupt themselves. They seek to corrupt others and draw them into the same destruction!

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#### **William Barclay gives a detailed explanation of Herod's multiple marriages -**

JOHN was so plain and blunt a preacher of righteousness that he was bound to run into trouble. In the end Herod arrested him. Josephus says that the reason for the arrest was that Herod "feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it in his power and inclination to raise a rebellion; for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise." That is no doubt true but the New Testament writers give a much more personal and immediate cause. Herod Antipas had married Herodias and John rebuked him for it.

**The relationships involved in this marriage are extremely complicated.** Herod the Great was a much-married man. Herod Antipas, who married Herodias and who arrested John, was the son of Herod the Great by a woman called Malthake. Herodias herself was the daughter of Aristobulus, who was the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne, commonly called the Hasmonean. As we have seen, Herod had divided up his realm between Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip. He had another son, also called Herod, who was his son by another Mariamne, the daughter of a high priest. This Herod had no share in his father's realms and lived as a private citizen in Rome; he married Herodias. He was in fact her half-uncle, because her father, Aristobulus, and he were both sons of Herod by different wives. Herod Antipas, on a visit to Rome, seduced her from his half-brother and married her. She was at one and the same time his sister-in-law, because she was married to his half-brother, and his niece because she was the daughter of Aristobulus, another half-brother.

The whole proceeding was utterly revolting to Jewish opinion and quite contrary to Jewish law, and indeed improper on any standards. It was a dangerous thing to rebuke an eastern tyrant, but John did so. The result was that he was arrested and imprisoned in the dungeon castle of Machaerus on the shores of the Dead Sea. There could be no greater cruelty than to take this child of the desert and shut him up in a dungeon cell. Ultimately he was beheaded to gratify the resentment of Herodias (Matthew 14:5-12; Mark 6:17-29).

It is always dangerous to speak the truth; and yet although the man who allies himself with the truth may end in gaol or on the scaffold, in the final count he is the victor. Once the Earl of Morton, who was regent of Scotland, threatened Andrew Melville, the reformer. "There will never," he said menacingly, "be quietness in this country till half a dozen of you be hanged or banished." Melville answered him, "Tush! sir, threaten not your courtiers in that fashion. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground ... God be glorified, it will not lie in your power to hang nor exile his truth." Plato once said that the wise man will always choose to suffer wrong rather than to do wrong. We need only ask ourselves whether in the last analysis and at the final assize we would

prefer to be Herod Antipas or John the Baptist (See [Luke 3](#))

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### **Steven Cole - Pointing people to Christ requires confronting their sin.**

As we have seen, John's message is summed up as "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ are at the heart of the gospel. A person who does not see and feel himself to be a sinner has no reason to need a Savior. If I came up to you and said, "I have great news! The governor has just offered you a pardon from prison," you would not be very thrilled with that news, and you might even be offended. Why? You are not guilty of any crime deserving of prison. But, if you have just been convicted of a serious crime and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, my announcement would be the most welcome news you could imagine.

If you walk up to a person who is not a Christian and say, "I have great news! God loves you and Jesus Christ died for your sins," the person will not appreciate your message and he might even get offended. He will think, "Of course God loves me! God is love and I'm a basically loveable person! But as for this sin stuff, I'm only human and I have my faults, but I'm not that bad of a person. Why do I need Jesus to die for my sins?"

How do you get a person who thinks of himself as basically good to see the utter sinfulness of his own heart so that he will see his need for the Savior? God's method is to preach His perfect Law to the sinner so that he sees how utterly he has failed to keep that Law. "Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" so that a man sees that he is accountable before God (Rom. 3:19, 20). Thus the Law becomes "our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

We see in Luke 3:19 that John the Baptist preached the Law even to Herod Antipas. Herod had divorced his own wife and seduced Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, who was also his own niece. By so doing, he was guilty of both adultery and incest. John confronted Herod with this violation of God's Law, along with other wicked things that he had done. We don't know if John did this in a private interview with Herod, through a sermon when Herod was present in the audience, or if John's public rebuke of Herod in his absence got back to him. But John boldly proclaimed that the ruler was under the same Law of God as the common person. Sadly, Herod did not respond with repentance, but rather added to his many sins by locking John up in prison and later executing him. But in spite of the consequences, John didn't soften the message, because he knew that neither Herod nor anyone else would come to Christ unless he was first convicted of his sin.

Herod's treatment of John should alert us to the fact that we may not be warmly welcomed when we bring up the matter of a person's sin. But even so, we must remember that we do no one a favor by tiptoeing around the sin issue. Modern evangelicalism has fallen into the trap of marketing the gospel as the way to have a happy life, but we often minimize or sidestep the serious nature of sin. But until a person comes under the conviction of the Holy Spirit so that he sees that he is justly guilty before God, he will not appreciate God's grace that was shown to us in the cross of Christ. Being forgiven little, he will love Christ little.

The Bible tells us that sinners are "darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (Eph. 4:18, 19). Obviously, we cannot break through all the defenses that sinners have erected to justify themselves as they continue their course of sin. Only God by His mighty power can break through their hardened hearts and reveal Christ to their souls. He does it primarily through His Word, both written and preached.

Thus one of the best ways you can confront a sinner with his sin is to get him to read the New Testament. He won't be five chapters into Matthew until he reads that if he has been angry with his brother, he has broken the commandment not to murder. If he has lusted after a woman in his heart, he has broken God's commandment against adultery. You can also give him tapes of sermons by preachers who preach God's Law. We have an excellent video in our church library, "The Ten Cannons of God's Law," by Pastor Ray Comfort, that will help you understand how to use God's Law in your witnessing to bring people to conviction of sin. But remember, you are not really pointing a person to Jesus Christ unless you help him to see that he is a guilty sinner, under the just condemnation of God's holy Law. ([Luke 3:15-22](#))

### **Luke 3:20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison**

- Lu 13:31-34 2Ki 21:16 24:4 2Ch 24:17-22 36:16 Ne 9:26 Jer 2:30 Mt 21:35-41 22:6,7 23:31-33 1Th 2:15,16 Rev 16:6
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur

## JOHN IMPRISONED BY HEROD ANTIPAS

**Herod** - refers to Herod Antipas ([see note](#)).

**Herod also added this to them all** - This is "evil addition" compounding his other evil deeds! Herod should have listened to John, repented and received forgiveness ("subtracting" so to speak from his sins rather than adding to them).

**Darrell Bock** writes "Herod's response to the exposure of his sin is instructive. He does not face the sin and take responsibility for it; he strikes back, taking advantage of his authority to do so. Such a response is all too familiar. Herod will use all the authority at his disposal to silence the voice of conviction, for eventually he will execute John. Sin confronted but unchecked often becomes sin multiplied and magnified. Defensiveness in the face of sin is inevitably self-destructive. Unfortunately, the damage often extends beyond the one who is sinning. (See [Luke](#))

**He locked John up in prison** ([phulake](#)) - This passage is clearly not in chronological sequence in regard to John's ministry. For example, we know from Mt 3:13-16 that Jesus came to John to be baptized, which is the event Luke describes next in Lk 3:21-22. Obviously John could not have been locked up in prison and at the same time baptized Jesus in the Jordan River! In fact it was actually later that John was imprisoned. And so we are not surprised to see Luke mention John again in Luke 7:17-20. As mentioned above, although John receives little mention after the inception of Jesus' ministry, John's ministry did overlap with His Lord for about six months. Mark is more chronological in describing the later imprisonment and martyrdom of John. (Mark 6:17-30) As John MacArthur says "Luke in verse 20 simply tells us the end of the story before it actually happened."

**Prison** (5438)([phulake](#) from [phulasso](#) = to guard, watch) means a guarding (the act of guarding or keeping watch - Lk 2:8, Nu 1:53, 3:7, 28) or guard (the person doing the watching - Acts 12:10) , a prison as a place where someone is guarded (Mt 5:25, 14:3, 10, 18:30, 25:36, 39, 43, etc).

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**Illustration** - Even if you have not seen the popular movie, "Titanic" (I have not and don't plan to), you know the basic story. The supposedly unsinkable ship hit an iceberg on her maiden voyage, sending 1,517 people to their watery graves. What you may not know is that most, if not all, could have been saved. Another ship, the Californian, had passed within sight of the Titanic and made radio contact at 11 p.m. At 11:30, the captain and wireless operator on the Californian went to bed. Ten minutes later, the Titanic hit the iceberg. Although the officer on duty on the Californian saw the distress rockets from the Titanic, he wasn't sure what they meant and he couldn't arouse the sleepy captain. A report testified that if the Californian had responded, many, if not all, of the lives that were lost could have been saved. We may condemn the captain of the Californian who slept while 1,500 people perished nearby. But aren't we often guilty of the same thing if we're complacent while people around us perish? We need to be sensitive. I'm not suggesting that we use offensive methods. But we must not hold back from warning people about sin and judgment. We must tell them about the supremacy of Jesus Christ and how they must trust in Him alone as their Savior from the wrath to come. I pray that we all would join John the Baptist in pointing people to Christ, even if it costs us as it did cost John. (Steven Cole)

**Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened**

- **Jesus:** Mt 3:13-15 Mk 1:9 Joh 1:32-34
- **praying:** Lu 9:28,29 Joh 12:27,28
- **heaven:** Mt 3:16,17 Mk 1:10 John 1:32-34
- [Multiple Luke 3 Resources](#) (including those below)
- [Luke 3:21-22 The Messiah's Divine Confirmation, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:21-22 The Messiah's Divine Confirmation, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:15-22](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:21-22 Emblems of the Holy Spirit-the Dove](#) - W A Criswell

## JESUS' MINISTRY INAUGURATED AT HIS BAPTISM

**Parallel descriptions of Jesus' Baptism** - note words in **BOLD** are **NOT** found in Luke's account.

Matt. 3:13–17+ Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. **14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” 15 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.** 16 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 1:9–11+ - In those days Jesus **came from Nazareth** in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 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.”

**Now when all the people were baptized ([baptizo](#)), Jesus was also baptized ([baptizo](#))** - Literally "had been baptized." Only Matthew 3:13-15+ discusses John's initial resistance to baptizing Jesus. After Jesus commanded him and explained His rationale, John baptized Him. See comments on Mt 3:15 for interpretations of why Jesus sought to be baptized.

It is interesting that Luke does not actually state Jesus was baptized by John as do Mark 1:9+ and Matthew 3:13. However Luke does mention it in Acts 1:22+ in preparation for naming a new apostle

“Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— **beginning with the baptism of John** until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” (Acts 1:21, 22+)

**And while He was praying ([proseuchomai](#))** - This fact not mentioned by the other synoptic Gospels. Why would Jesus need to pray if He was God? Because He was also fully Man, and as the perfect Son of man, Jesus gave us the perfect example of dependence on His Father to meet His needs by praying to His Father.

**THOUGHT** - O God, how we need to learn to follow the example of Jesus, that we too might experience sweet communion with You, our Father Who art in Heaven. Amen. See commentary on Jesus' pattern of communing with His Father as described in Mark 1:35. So here at the beginning of His ministry Jesus is praying and then again at the very end of His ministry, He was praying (Lk 22:44+, Lk 23:34+).

**Robertson** on **praying** - Alone in Luke who so often mentions the praying of Jesus. Present participle and so naturally meaning that the heaven was opened while Jesus was praying though not necessarily in answer to his prayer.

**Hendriksen** applies this text **He was praying** - It is especially Luke who emphasizes the fact that Jesus not only urged his disciples to pray, and even taught them to pray, but lived a life of prayer. When the teacher is himself seen doing the very things he tells others to do, his teaching is bound to be far more effective.

**Stein** notes that "For Luke prayer was frequently a time of revelation and direction from God. (Cf. Luke 1:9–11 [Zechariah]; 2:37–38 [Anna]; Acts 9:11–12 and Acts 22:17–21 [Paul]; 10:2–6 [Cornelius]; 10:9–16 [Peter]; 13:2–3 [prophets and teachers of the church].) Indeed Luke often added to narratives references to Jesus at prayer (Lk 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; cf. Lk 22:40-41). The Holy Spirit, furthermore, often comes in response to prayer (Cf. Luke 11:13; Acts 1:14; 2:1-4; 21, 38–39; Acts 4:23-31; 8:15-17). Jesus serves here as a model for Christians in their prayer lives. See Introduction 8 (Several distinct Lukan emphases exist concerning Christian living...The first involves **the importance of prayer for the believer**. Whereas the terms “prayer” and “pray” are found thirteen times in Mark and seventeen times in Matthew, they are found twenty-one times in Luke and twenty-five times in Acts. More significant, however, than the frequency of this concept in Luke-Acts is that it occurs at key times and places. The Gospel begins with prayer in the temple (Lk 1:9-10). After its brief summary of the Gospel's contents, Acts begins with the disciples' praying (Lk 1:14) and maintains this emphasis. Luke alone recorded that Jesus was praying at his baptism when he was anointed by the Spirit and that Jesus chose the Twelve after he had prayed all night (Luke 6:12). Only Luke recorded that Jesus prayed before he asked his disciples, “Who do the crowds say I am?” (Lk 9:18). Again only Luke mentioned that at his transfiguration Jesus went up on the mountain to pray and that while he was praying he was transfigured (Lk 9:28–29). In the context of his own praying, Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11:1–4). Through prayer believers are able to persist and not lose heart (Lk 18:1) and to keep from falling into temptation (Lk 22:40, 46). And because of Jesus' prayer, Peter's denial did not turn into apostasy (Lk 22:32). Clearly for Luke prayer was seen as a vital and necessary part of the Christian life both individually and corporately.). (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#)).

**Heaven was opened ([anoigo](#))** - The opening of heaven is a frequent apocalyptic motif found in the giving of revelation (Read Ezek 1:1; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 19:11.) as is a voice from heaven. (Read Isa 6:4, 8; Ezek 1:25, 28; Rev 4:1; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13.) (Stein) It is interesting that the **heavens** were **opened** to mark the inauguration of Jesus' earthly ministry to **accomplish redemption of mankind**, while in Revelation 19:11+ the **heavens** are opened to mark the return of Jesus to **accomplish His**

**redemption of the earth** (cf Rev 5:9-see [commentary](#) = Garland writes "the redemption in view [in Rev 5:9] is both *soteriological* -- individual souls are reconciled to God and *eschatological* -- the original creation will be restored at last.")

**Steven Cole** - The way Luke presents Jesus' baptism minimizes John's role (he is not even mentioned) and even downplays the baptism itself. Rather Luke emphasizes that after the baptism, while Jesus was praying, heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and a voice came out of heaven affirming, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." The fact that Jesus would even submit to baptism signifies that at the outset of His ministry, He identified Himself with the sinners He came to save. Luke emphasizes Jesus' prayer life, which shows His dependence as the Son of Man on the Heavenly Father (there are seven references to Jesus praying in Luke: 3:21 [baptism]; 5:16 [growing fame]; 6:12 [choosing the 12]; 9:18 [just before Peter's confession]; 9:29 [Transfiguration]; 11:1 [before Lord's Prayer]; and, 22:41 [Gethsemane]). The fact that **heaven** was **opened** shows that in Jesus, God was breaking into human history. The Holy Spirit's descent as a dove probably points to the gentleness and purity of the Spirit, and also shows the Holy Trinity united in the launching of Jesus' ministry. The affirmation of the Father from heaven relates to two Old Testament texts: Psalm 2:7, where the Father says of Messiah, "You are My Son"; and, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." (Note the clear reference to the Trinity in this Old Testament passage!) The Father's being pleased with His beloved Son assures us that He is satisfied with His offering Himself on the cross for our sins. If we are in Christ, the Beloved, then we are accepted in the presence of the Holy God. When you bear witness, always bring people back to the exalted person and work of Jesus Christ. If they bring up objections or questions, answer them briefly if you must, but steer the conversation back to Jesus Christ. If we lift Him up, He will draw men to Himself (John 12:32). ([Pointing People to Christ Luke 3:15-22](#))

#### Related Resource:

- See comments on Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:9-10

#### OTHER HEAVENLY OPENINGS -

As Stephen was about to be martyred he declared "**Behold**, I see **the heavens opened up** ([dianoigo](#)) and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56+)

In Acts 10:11+ Peter "saw **the sky opened up**, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground."

In the Revelation the apostle John writes "And **I saw heaven opened** ([anoigo](#)), and **behold**, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war." (Rev 19:11+, cf also Rev 4:1+, Rev 11:19+)

It is interesting to note Isaiah's prayer for divine intervention, which some think will be the type of prayer that the redeemed remnant of Israel will be praying during the [Great Tribulation days](#), the Time of Jacob's Trouble/Distress (Jer 30:6+). "**Oh, that You would rend** (Lxx = [anoigo](#)) **the heavens and come down**, That the mountains might quake at Your presence" (Isa 64:1)

Luke emphasizes Jesus' human nature. Jesus was born to humble parents, a birth unannounced except to shepherds and foreigners. This baptism recorded here was the first public declaration of Jesus' ministry. Instead of going to Jerusalem and identifying with the established religious leaders, Jesus went to a river and identified with those who were repenting of sin. When Jesus, at age 12, had visited the Temple, He had understood his mission (Lk 2:49). Eighteen years later, at his baptism, He began carrying it out. And as Jesus prayed, God spoke and confirmed His decision to act. God was breaking into human history through Jesus the Christ. (Life Application Note)

One might ask but why did Jesus who was without sin need to submit to John's baptism, which we have called a baptism of repentance? We have to be honest and say we don't know with absolute certainty. Luke does not explain why Jesus submitted. The fact that the Father declares "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." would strongly support that Jesus had no need for repentance. In Mt 3:15 Jesus said "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

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**He was praying** ([present tense](#) - continually)(4336)([proseuchomai](#) from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim.

**Wuest** adds that the prefixed preposition **pros** "gives it the idea of definiteness and directness in prayer, with the consciousness on the part of the one praying that he is talking face to face with God."

**Opened** (455) (**anoigo** from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, to open again, to give access to. Mark's description (Mk 1:11) uses a different verb *schizo* which also describes the "opening" (tearing) of the veil of the Temple when Jesus died on the Cross (See discussion of *schizo*).

Luke's 23 uses of **anoigo** in 23 verses (Gospel and Acts) - this is clearly a key word for Luke. Lk. 1:64; Lk. 3:21; Lk. 4:17; Lk. 11:9; Lk. 11:10; Lk. 12:36; Lk. 13:25; Jn. 1:51; Acts 5:19; Acts 5:23; Acts 8:32; Acts 8:35; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:40; Acts 10:11; Acts 10:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 12:14; Acts 12:16; Acts 14:27; Acts 16:26; Acts 16:27; Acts 18:14; Acts 26:18

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#### QUESTION - [Why was Jesus baptized? Why was Jesus' baptism important?](#) - Gotquestions.org

**ANSWER:** At first glance, it seems that Jesus' baptism has no purpose at all. John's baptism was the baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:11), but Jesus was sinless and had no need of repentance. Even John was taken aback at Jesus' coming to him. John recognized his own sin and was aware that he, a sinful man in need of repentance himself, was unfit to baptize the spotless Lamb of God: "I need to be baptized by You and You are coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14). Jesus replied that it should be done because "**it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**" (Matthew 3:15).

There are several reasons why it was fitting for John to baptize Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus was about to embark on His great work, and it was appropriate that He be recognized publicly by His forerunner. John was the "voice crying in the wilderness" prophesied by Isaiah, calling people to repentance in preparation for their Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). By baptizing Him, John was declaring to all that here was the One they had been waiting for, the Son of God, the One he had predicted would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus' baptism by John takes on an added dimension when we consider that John was of the tribe of Levi and a direct descendant of Aaron. Luke specifies that both of John's parents were of the Aaronic priestly line (Luke 1:5). One of the duties of the priests in the Old Testament was to present the sacrifices before the Lord. John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus could be seen as a priestly presentation of the Ultimate Sacrifice. John's words the day after the baptism have a decidedly priestly air: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Jesus' baptism also showed that He identified with sinners. His baptism symbolized the sinners' baptism into the righteousness of Christ, dying with Him and rising free from sin and able to walk in the newness of life. His perfect righteousness would fulfill all the requirements of the Law for sinners who could never hope to do so on their own. When John hesitated to baptize the sinless Son of God, Jesus replied that it was proper to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). By this He alluded to the righteousness that He provides to all who come to Him to exchange their sin for His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In addition, Jesus' coming to John showed His approval of John's baptism, bearing witness to it, that it was from heaven and approved by God. This would be important in the future when others would begin to doubt John's authority, particularly after his arrest by Herod (Matthew 14:3-11).

Perhaps most importantly, the occasion of the public baptism recorded for all future generations the perfect embodiment of the triune God revealed in glory from heaven. The testimony directly from heaven of the Father's pleasure with the Son and the descending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17) is a beautiful picture of the trinitarian nature of God. It also depicts the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in the salvation of those Jesus came to save. The Father loves the elect from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4); He sends His Son to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); and the Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8) and draws the believer to the Father through the Son. All the glorious truth of the mercy of God through Jesus Christ is on display at His baptism.

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#### Luke 3:21-22 Being Useful -

A voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." —Luke 3:22

Jesus emerged from obscurity and was baptized by John the Baptist. When He came out of the water, He heard His Father say, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

What had Jesus been doing that merited such unqualified acceptance? He had not yet performed one miracle; He had not preached a single sermon; He had not cleansed one leper. In fact, He had not yet done anything that we normally associate with greatness. What had He been doing in Nazareth during those 30 silent years? He was growing "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk 2:52).

What's done in the silent place with God is what matters. It's in the quiet hours of fellowship with God that we're shaped and molded



and made into men and women He can use—people with whom He can be well-pleased.

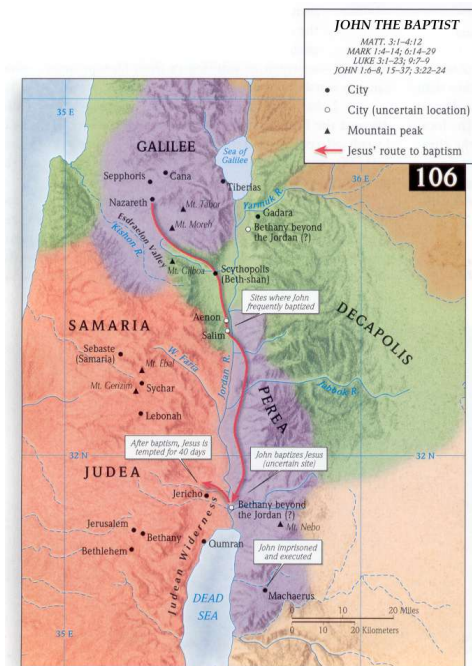
You might be thinking, I'm in a place where I can't be useful. You may feel limited and frustrated by the cramping restrictions of age, an illness, a difficult child, an uncooperative spouse. But your place, wherever it is, is a place to grow. Spend time in God's Word and in prayer. Grow and bloom where you are, and your Father will be pleased with you. [By David H. Roper \(Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved\)](#)

You'll go forth a little stronger  
With a fresh supply of grace,  
If each day you meet the Savior  
In a secret, quiet place.  
—Adams

**Fruitful service grows in the soil of faithful worship.**

**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."**

- **You are:** Lu 9:34,35 Ps 2:7 Isa 42:1 Mt 12:18 17:5 27:43 Col 1:13 1Pe 2:4 2Pe 1:17,18
- [Luke 3:15-22 Pointing People to Christ](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:21-22 The Messiah's Divine Confirmation, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
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## MESSIAH'S DIVINE "CREDENTIALS"

and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven (See also related comments on Mark 1:10) - Notice all three members of the Trinity are mentioned here, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that there is one God Who exists in three persons, one in substance, co-eternal and co-equal. Our finite minds cannot fully explain the Trinity. No explanation can adequately portray the power and intricacy of this unique relationship. Many have sought analogies in nature but none are perfect for there is no other relationship like the Trinity.

**Related Resources on Trinity:**

- [What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?](#)
- [What are some popular illustrations of the Holy Trinity?](#)
- [How can there be subordination / hierarchy in the Trinity?](#)
- [How is the doctrine of the Trinity not tritheism?](#)
- [What is Trinitarianism? Is Trinitarianism biblical?](#)

**Matthew** describes this event as follows:

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John the Baptist) saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, (Mt. 3:16)

**John** adds this description

John (the Baptist) testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. (John 1:32)

**W A Criswell** makes an excellent point regarding John's witness of the Spirit coming upon Jesus - Luke here indicates how the Holy Spirit becomes visible to both Jesus and John (Mt. 3:16; John 1:32). The import of this event is crucial in theology. This verse denies **modalism** (See article on [Sabellianism, Modalism, and Monarchianism](#)), the heresy which construed the unity of God to be manifested in three different, momentary forms -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The idea of God appearing sometimes as one and then as the other is proved to be **unscriptural**. Here there is simultaneously the appearance of Son and Holy Spirit. At the same time the voice of the Father is heard. Clearly, God is the Triune God, eternally Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2). Luke quotes from Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1, which identify Jesus as the Son of God and the Suffering Servant. All three Persons of the Trinity are here together for the first time in the Gospel.

**The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove-** (Matthew has **the Spirit of God**; Mark, **the Spirit**) Jesus is anointed and supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit for His supernatural ministry. Do not misunderstand this descent of the Spirit on Jesus -- Jesus always had the Holy Spirit's presence from the first moment of the incarnation because He is God and God is Trinity and thus Jesus the God-Man could never be separated from the Holy Spirit. The descent at Jesus' baptism is more of a "marker" if you will to show us that His formal ministry is now beginning. And thus Luke immediately emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry in the next chapter...

Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was **led around by the Spirit** in the wilderness (Lk 4:1+)

And Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power ([dunamis](#)) of the Spirit**, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching (WHAT WAS HIS POWER TO TEACH? WHAT ABOUT OUR POWER TO PREACH OR TEACH?) in their synagogues and was praised by all. (Lk 4:14-15+)

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE **HE ANOINTED ME** TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (Lk 4:18-19+)

**Brief Excursus on the Holy Spirit in the Believer's Life** If Jesus needed to depend on the the Holy Spirit for His ministry, how much more do we need the Spirit in our daily lives to enable us to live and minister supernaturally! John writes that "he one who says he abides in Him ([present tense](#) - continually) ought himself ([present tense](#) - continually) to walk in the same manner as He walked." (1 Jn 2:6+) Beloved, we need to learn how to walk daily by the Spirit (Gal 5:16+), if we are to experience "victory" in our ongoing struggle with our flesh (cf Gal 5:17+)! Jesus of course did not have the fallen flesh as we do and yet He too humbled Himself and was daily relying on the same Holy Spirit and the same supernatural power to which we have access. Every morning present us with a challenge and a choice -- will I yield to the Spirit today (Eph 5:18+, cf Ro 12:1+) or will I stubbornly choose to do it "MY WAY!" How much easier it is to simply confess, repent, and be filled each morning and walk out into the battle filled with the supernatural power of the Spirit, staying alert for those "pop quizzes" God allows in our lives where we have the choice to continue to rely on the Spirit (e.g., for "self-control", etc - Gal 5:23+) or to rely on our fallen flesh. If you fail (e.g., an anger thought or word flies suddenly out of your mouth, confess, repent, be filled, ask forgiveness and press on toward the goal - Php 3:14+). Beloved, it takes practice to walk like Jesus' walked! In fact it is a life long process and will not end until the day we are glorified (1 Jn 3:2+). So take heart and keep on fighting the good fight of faith for the glory of the Name of Jesus. Amen.

In Acts 10:37-38+ Peter describes the vital role of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus

"you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. 38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how **God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power** ([dunamis](#)), and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

**Comment - Anointed** in Acts 10:38 is [chrío](#) which means to consecrate/set apart for sacred work as by unction. The idea is to assign a person to task, with implication of supernatural sanctions, blessing, and endowment. And so fittingly Jesus is also given the title of [Christos](#) (from [chrío](#)), also called the [Messiah - Anointed One](#). John uses the related word [chrisma](#) describing the believer's anointing in 1 John 2:20+ and 1 John 2:27+ which in context refers to our "anointing" with the Holy Spirit, this "anointing" occurring the moment we were regenerated by grace through faith. Have you ever considered yourself to be an anointed saint? You are! See interesting CARM.org article [1 John 2:27. You are anointed of God](#) and here is a brief quote to "wet your appetite" - "It is this anointing that opens your mind, teaches you, guides you, calls you to pray, empowers you, and enables you to be stronger Christians, more powerful Christians. Not just people who are saved, but people who are saved, indwelt, and empowered."

**In bodily** ([somatikos](#)) **form** ([eidos](#)) **like a dove** - (**bodily form** is a phrase found only in Luke) Luke uses [a term of comparison](#) specifically a [simile](#) (comparison using like or as). While there is definitely a visible expression that had the form of a body similar to a dove, it does necessarily mean that the Spirit actually assumed the form of a dove.

**Matthew** has

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending **as a dove**, and coming upon Him, (Mt 3:16).

**Mark** has

And immediately (click for devotional thought on "immediately") coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening (schizo), and the **Spirit like a dove** descending upon Him (Mk 1:10+)

[Robertson](#) - This probably means that the Baptist saw the vision that looked like a dove. Nothing is gained by denying the fact or possibility of the vision that looked like a dove. God manifests his power as he will. The symbolism of the dove for the Holy Spirit is intelligible. We are not to understand that this was the beginning of the Incarnation of Christ as the [Cerinthian Gnostics](#) held (**ED**: Click for more discussion of this heresy). But this fresh influx of the Holy Spirit may have deepened the Messianic consciousness of Jesus and certainly revealed him to the Baptist as God's Son

**A voice came out of heaven** - This is God the Father speaking (because He calls Jesus His Son). This is the first of three recorded occasions when the Father spoke from heaven. The second was when Jesus was transfigured (Luke 9:28–36), and the third was during His last week before the cross (John 12:28).

**You are My beloved** ([agapetos](#)) **Son, in You I am well-pleased** ([eudokeo](#)) - [NET Note](#) writes that "the force of agapetos is often "pertaining to one who is the only one of his or her class, but at the same time is particularly loved and cherished." **Kent Hughes** adds that "He was pleased in retrospect because Jesus had lived thirty sinless years as "the righteousness of God." He was pleased at the prospect of Christ's atoning death. And he was pleased that the failed, flawed children of the first Adam would be redeemed by the blood of the flawless, triumphant, second Adam."

**William Barclay** feels that this this " saying is composed of two texts. You are my beloved Son—that is from Psalm 2:7 and was always accepted as a description of the Messianic King. In whom I am well pleased—that is part of Isaiah 42:1 and is from a description of the servant of the Lord whose portrait culminates in the sufferings of Isaiah 53:1-12." ([Luke 3](#))

Psalm 2:7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

**John MacArthur** has an interesting comment considering that Jesus had come to give His life as a sacrifice for sins (Heb 10:12+, cf Heb 9:26+) - "God had examined, as it were, His beloved Son, who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of those with whom He was willing to identify Himself. No imperfection could be found in Him, and God was delighted." (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**L O Richards** adds that **well pleased** means, "among other things, that Jesus was fulfilling the Messianic role to which God had

called him. In contrast, God was not pleased with the sacrifices and offerings of the OT system (Heb 10:6, 8+). They could not be established in His purpose as a way to cleanse humanity from sin." (Borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Life Application Study Note** - Theologians have long been troubled by Jesus' allowing himself to be baptized by John. After all, this baptism was for sinners. Why, then, did Jesus do it? He did it because he is both God and human—he underwent baptism and even death as only a human could; he lived a sinless life and rose from the dead as only God could. This baptism by John in the Jordan River was another step in his identification with us sinful people; and the arrival of the dove signifies God's approval. Now Jesus would officially begin his ministry as God's beloved Son walking the dusty roads of Israel. When you are hurting, depressed, broken, remember: You have a Savior who understands your humanity. When you sin, remember: He has paid the price for your disobedience. ([Reference](#))

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**Bodily** (4984) (**somatikos** from **soma** - body) means having the form and characteristics of a body. **Somatikos** also means pertaining to the body in as used by Paul in describing "bodily discipline (which) is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1Ti 4.8+)

**Form** (appearance, sight) (1491) (**eidōs** from **eidō** = see) literally means that which is seen or what is visible and then the external appearance (shape and structure) of something as it appears to someone.

**Beloved** (27) (**agapetos** from **agapao** = to love, **agape** = unconditional love borne by Spirit - Gal 5:22) means beloved, dear, very much loved. **Agapetos** describes the love of another, this love being called out of the "giver's" heart by preciousness of the recipient of the love (the "beloved"). **Agapetos** describes "one who is in a very special relationship with another" (BDAG) and in secular Greek is used mostly of a child, especially an only child to whom all the love of his parents is given (cf use by the Father describing His only Son and Abraham describing his "only son" in Ge 22:2). In the context of the New Testament **agape** love speaks of God's divine and infinite love, a love that seeks the ultimate spiritual welfare of the one loved.

The first 7 uses of **agapetos** in the NT are of God the Father speaking of Jesus, His **beloved** Son (Mt. 3:17; Mt 12:18; Mt 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Mk 9:7; Mk 12:6; Lk. 3:22+) and as Friberg says these uses describe "One not only greatly loved but also unique, the only one of a class." This usage by God to describe His only Son, the Son of His love, gives you some idea of the preciousness of the word **beloved**! This truth makes it even more incredible that believers are referred to as "beloved of God." (Ro 1:7+). It is so easy to forget this incomprehensible truth!

**Well-pleased** (take pleasure) (2106) (**eudokeo**) describes the Father's taking pleasure or delight in His Son. To delight means to take great pleasure, to give keen enjoyment, to provide a high degree of gratification. In this regard it is notable that 5 of the first 6 uses (the Gospels) refer to the Father's taking pleasure in His Son (in Whom He was "well pleased") (cf. Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cp 2Pe 1:17).

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**HERESY - DECEITFUL SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS - "Jesus Only"** or Oneness Pentecostalism teaches there is no Trinity, just different "modes" but a verse like this shows how utterly ridiculous, foolish and deceived such a belief actually is! Is Jesus a ventriloquist, throwing His voice into the clouds so that it speaks words of affirmation to Himself? This shows how far some cults go to twist the truth of Scripture. What is dangerous about the Oneness Movement is it looks so much like the "real thing," and it is easy to fall into this cultish system! It is always best to let the Scriptures speak for themselves and in this passage a simple reading/understanding of the text shows that Jesus is not the Father and the Father is not Jesus. Could it be more clearly/plainly portrayed? I think not! **Gotquestions** adds "The "Jesus Only" movement, also known as Oneness Pentecostalism or oneness theology, teaches that there is only one God, but denies the tri-unity of God. In other words, oneness theology does not recognize the distinct persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It has various forms—some see Jesus Christ as the one God, who sometimes manifests Himself as the Father or the Holy Spirit. The core doctrine of Oneness Pentecostal / Jesus Only is that Jesus is the Father and Jesus is the Spirit. There is one God who reveals Himself in different "modes." As an aside, a popular singing group in Christian contemporary music is named Phillips, Craig and Dean, a group which has apparently espoused teachings of the Jesus Only movement ([See discussion of their doctrinal beliefs](#)). The point is that in these "[last days](#)" every true believer needs to be a BEREAN (Acts 17:11+) who is taking in solid food (PURE MILK OF THE WORD - 1 Pe 2:2+) which is "for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14+).

- [What are the Beliefs of Jesus Only/Oneness Pentecostals?](#)
  - [What is Sabellianism \(Modalism\)?](#)
  - **Dr Wayne Grudem's** discussion of the **Trinity and Modalism** in his online text [Systematic Theology - scroll down to page 199](#) - "Modalism gains its attractiveness from the desire to emphasize clearly the fact that there is only one God." (Grudem)
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**Luke 3:23 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**

- **thirty:** Ge 41:46 Nu 4:3,35,39,43,47 t
- **being:** Lu 4:22 Mt 13:55 Mk 6:3 Joh 6:42
- [Two Genealogies of Jesus](#)
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:21-4:13 Jesus, the One Who Comes](#) - Darrell Bock
- [Luke 3:23-28 - The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole (deals with several difficult problems)
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur - **excellent discussion!**

**NET** So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

## **THE HOUR STRIKES FOR JESUS!**

Chart From [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)

**When He began *His ministry*, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age** -The words "His ministry" are not in the Greek. **William Barclay** aptly entitles this section "The Hour Strikes for Jesus!" We last heard of Jesus in Lk 2:42 at age 12 when He amazed the teachers in the Temple with His answers (Lk 2:42-47). Then for 18 years Jesus waited in the wing and now is being prepared to step onto center stage and accomplish the work the Father had given for Him to do. (Jn 17:4)

**Recommendation** - If you are confused about the two genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, I would highly recommend taking time to read Dr John MacArthur's easy to understand explanation of the differences and the significance of those differences in his sermon [The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#). It will greatly enhance your understanding of a topic which many believers often find puzzling. I have quoted extensively from his sermon because it gives such a helpful way to explain this otherwise puzzling topic.

**John MacArthur on Messiah's "credentials"** - (1) the baptism (Lk 3:21-23), (2) the genealogy (Lk 3:23-38) and (3) the temptation (Lk 4:1-13), those three great credentials: The affirmation of heaven, the victory over hell, and royal credentials right in the middle. Ancestry then is a credential not to be left out...Now the ancestry of Jesus is important, as I said, because it proves that He is not merely a self-appointed Messiah, as some like Hugh Schonfield in *The Passover Plot* and all their ilk would want us to believe. He is not a misguided reformer. He is not a self-appointed Savior. He is not a would-be, want-to-be Savior of the...of the nation Israel from their terrible stress under their Roman occupation. He is not a man caught up in a popular acclaim. He is not a sort of magician who drew crowds after Himself and developed a Messiah illusion or a Messiah complex. The genealogy goes back to David and then it goes back to Abraham and then it goes back to Adam and then it goes back to God finally. This is the culmination of all redemptive history in this person Jesus. It starts with God through Adam, through Abraham, through David and right down to Jesus Himself. He is not just a good teacher, He is not just a great man, He is not an isolated prophet, He is not an isolated preacher. This is the culmination of all the history of humanity from God, from Adam, through Abraham, through David down to Jesus. He is the culmination of human history as well as Israel's history. He is the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose. He is the culmination of all who ever lived. He is the hope of all humanity and all humanity is inseparably and eternally connected to Him. The fate of everyone who ever lives is linked to Jesus. (For discussion of more proofs of the credentials of Messiah from Luke 1 and Luke 2 see the full sermon [Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

We know from Acts that Jesus began His public ministry at His baptism

Acts 1:21-22 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— **beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us**—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Acts 10:37-38 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the **baptism** which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how **God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

**Thirty years of age** - Ezekiel (interestingly called "son of man" throughout the book) began his ministry at age 30 (Ezek 1:1).

Joseph was also 30 "when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (prime minister - Ge. 41:46) "David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. (2 Sa 5:4). Thirty was also the age at which the priests began to serve, Moses recording "from thirty years and upward, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tent of meeting." (Nu. 4:3, cf Nu 4:35, 39, 43, 47; 1 Chr 23:3). In short, Jesus began His public ministry at an age the Jewish people would consider appropriate when compared to other Biblical ministries.

**ESV Note** - If Jesus was born sometime before Herod the Great's death in 4 b.c. (cf. Matt. 2:16) and began his ministry c. a.d. 28 (see Luke 3:1), he would have been about thirty years old (or in his early 30s). ((Borrow the [ESV study Bible](#)) )

**Hughes** adds "The heavenly voice spliced together allusions to two remarkable messianic texts. The first, "You are my Son," referenced verse 7 of the famous second Psalm, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." The emphasis of Psalm 2 is in the Messiah's unique father/son relationship with God, which would be the basis for his kingly, messianic rule, his reigning messiahship." (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Hendriksen** - Between chapters 1 and 2, on the one hand, and chapter 3, on the other, there is a marked division. The "boy" of 12 (Lk 2:42) becomes the "man" of approximately 30 (Lk 3:23). The eighteen intervening years are passed by in silence. ([Luke New Testament Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole** - Many people these days are turning to financial counselors for advice and help with investments. An article I read on this urges the reader carefully to check out a potential advisor's credentials before you allow him any knowledge of or access to your money. It makes sense, if your money and future security are at stake, to have some good reasons to trust the person giving you advice. If it makes sense to check out the credentials of a financial advisor, it makes even more sense to be sure about the credentials of one to whom you entrust your eternal destiny as your Savior from God's judgment. While all of the Gospel accounts, and even all the Bible, serve to establish the credibility of Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior, Luke focuses on three lines of evidence prior to introducing the beginning of Jesus' ministry: (1) The testimony of John the Baptist and of God the Father and the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism (Lk 3:15-22); (2) the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:23-38), which we're considering in this study; and, Jesus' victory over Satan's temptations (Lk 4:1-13). Luke's purpose in putting the genealogy here is to show how ...The genealogy of Jesus shows Him to be God's promised Savior for all people. ([The Genealogy of Jesus Luke 3:23-38](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Luke interrupted his narrative at this point to give us a genealogy of Jesus. Matthew's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17) begins with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus, while Luke's begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. Matthew gives us the genealogy of Joseph, the legal foster-father of Jesus, while Luke gives us the genealogy of His mother Mary. Luke 3:23 can be translated: "When He began His ministry, Jesus was about thirty years old (being supposedly the son of Joseph), the son of Heli [an ancestor of Mary]." Mary herself would not be mentioned because it was unusual for women to be named in the official genealogies, though Matthew names four of them (Matt. 1:3, 5, 16). By putting the genealogy here, Luke reminded his readers that the Son of God was also the Son of man, born into this world, identified with the needs and problems of mankind. And, since Joseph and Mary were both in David's line, these genealogies prove that Jesus of Nazareth has the legal right to David's throne (Luke 1:32-33). (Scroll to page 148 - [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**As was supposed** - Here Luke indirectly speaks of the Virgin Birth. In a sense although Mary is not directly mentioned in this genealogy, she is indirectly alluded to by Luke! When Jesus was born the people obviously supposed Joseph was the true father, having no concept of the Spirit's role in the virgin Mary's pregnancy. Joseph was not His biologic Father but Mary was His biologic mother.

**MacArthur** writes that "The Greek text makes it clear that Joseph is not part of Luke's genealogy. All the other names are preceded by the definite article tou, but Joseph is not, thus indicating that the mention of his name is parenthetical. The phrase could be more accurately rendered, "Jesus ... being (as was supposed the son of Joseph) the son of Eli"; that is, the grandson of Eli through Mary. This is another compelling reason for viewing Luke's genealogy as Mary's. How could this be Joseph's genealogy when Luke's grammar makes it clear that Joseph was not part of it?" (Luke Commentary)

**R. C. H. Lenski** - How Luke could think of appending a genealogy of Joseph after saying that Jesus was only supposed to be a son of Joseph, i.e., a physical son, Luke himself having shown at length that this supposition was wrong, and that Jesus was a physical son only of Mary, has yet to be made clear by those who find the genealogy of Joseph here. (Quoted in [Luke MacArthur Commentary](#))

**NET Note** on **as was supposed** - The parenthetical remark **as was supposed** makes it clear that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus.

**Gotquestions** (see full note below) says "Most conservative Bible scholars today take a different view, namely, that **Luke is recording Mary's genealogy** and Matthew is recording Joseph's. Matthew is following the line of Joseph (Jesus' legal father), through David's son Solomon, while Luke is following the line of Mary (Jesus' blood relative), through David's son Nathan. Since

there was no Greek word for "son-in-law," Joseph was called the "son of Heli" by marriage to Mary, Heli's daughter. Through either Mary's or Joseph's line, Jesus is a descendant of David and therefore eligible to be the Messiah. Tracing a genealogy through the mother's side is unusual, but so was the virgin birth. Luke's explanation is that Jesus was the son of Joseph, "so it was thought" (Luke 3:23)."

**Son of Eli** - Heli or Eli, a name of the father of Joseph, about whom nothing is known.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF ANCESTRY TO THE JEWS**

**John MacArthur** discusses the importance of ancestry to the Jews - To the Jews, genealogies were critical. **(1) Ancestry determined one's claim on land.** And that was based on the original tribal allocation of the land of Palestine. When the children of Israel went into the land of Palestine, God divided up the land and it was allocated according to tribal parcels. Nu 26:34, 35 address the issue that ancestry was very critical in determining anyone's claim on a piece of land. **(2) Ancestry determined claims to the right of inheritance.** Should a person come along and claim that they had a right to a property, they had a right to servants, they had a right to an estate, they had a right to crops, they had a right to material possessions, the determination of the validity of that claim would be placed upon the genealogy, and could the genealogy verify that claim that was critical for that. We find in the book of Ruth, for example, in chapters 3 and 4 that ancestry provided for the transfer of property. In order to transfer property, to sell property, to pass property, you had to prove that you had the right to do that and that there was some ancestral linkage in the transfer. **(3) Ancestry established the basis of taxation.** That's why when Joseph and Mary went to be taxed they went to Bethlehem because they were of the house and line of David. And that was the birthplace of that family and that's where they went because that's where their genealogical records were kept. And on the basis of those records, taxation was assessed. **(4) Any claim to the priesthood had to be verified by genealogy.** You find that, for example in the book of Esther 2:61,62. Anytime somebody made a claim to priesthood, it had to be proven that they were in fact in the priestly line. **(5) Any claim to royalty, any claim to being king, Messiah,** would have to have been verified, would have to have been proven that this one claiming to be king had lineage directly from the great king who was David himself. So if you claimed a royal pedigree, you had to prove it by your genealogy.

So in the theocracy of Israel — a kingdom under the rule of God...led by God-ordained priests and kings — in the theocracy of Israel, **genealogies became very critical....**And that is why the Jews kept...fastidious genealogical records, and the genealogy of Luke is indicative of that. He had access to the genealogy that he records here because it was likely a matter of the public record, as is the genealogy of Matthew 1. Yes, the Scripture is inspired by God, but inspiration from God does not mean that Luke or Matthew didn't have access to an actual record that was available in the public office and could be verified as the true and accurate genealogy of Jesus Christ. The Jews kept these accurate genealogies even after the Babylonian captivity. You remember in 586 B.C. Judah and Jerusalem was destroyed, the people were taken into captivity for seventy years and the nation really disintegrated at that point. But when they came back at the end of 70 years, one of the things they did along with rebuilding the temple, the city and the wall and reconstituting the nation was to get together all the genealogical records and they kept the records accurately from those ancient times through the captivity until all the records were destroyed in 70 A.D. When the Roman general Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. all of the records were destroyed. And today, much to the chagrin and sadness of the Jewish people, nobody knows their lineage because all the records have been destroyed. They can trace their lineage back into New Testament times, perhaps, but they cannot go beyond that because all the records were destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem. And that, by the design of God, because the system was done with at that point, there was no reason to keep genealogies anymore because the Messiah had arrived. And the purpose for which genealogies were kept was primarily for the Messiah, secondarily for the priesthood. But with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the priesthood came to an end as well. And so God through the Romans brought a judgment which caused the destruction of those records. But the time Luke wrote his gospel, of course, and at the time that Jesus came, the record was still intact. And it's very important as part of the credentials of the Messiah. If He is to be verified as the King, David's greater Son, who will rule, then He must have Davidic lineage.....The historian Josephus also writes that the Jews kept these genealogical records as a matter of public availability; that people could go into the public record and search out their genealogies. In fact, Josephus tells us that Jews who were caught up in the diaspora, the dispersion, scattered from Palestine all over the world, those Jews that were scattered around would when they had a child send the record of the birth of that child back to Jerusalem, or back to the place where the records for their family was kept in order that that child even though outside the land would be entered into the genealogical record. They wanted an official record to be maintained and it was....

Joseph and Mary...knew their family records went back to David. That's why they went to Bethlehem to be taxed because that was the city of David....they were surely aware of the fact that the prophets had said that the Messiah, the great King, the Christ would come to the house of David.... David had a number of sons and through those sons came many lines and, of course, they multiplied down from David all the way to the time of Christ so that there were many people who could trace their lineage back to David. But

still it was a great privilege and a great hope that somebody in their family would be the mother of the great King and the Messiah....many of the Greeks also kept their genealogical records. So they too would understand the role that a genealogy would play, especially when someone claimed to be royal blood and a right to be the king. So the people to whom Luke writes — whether they are Jews or Gentiles — would understand why he includes this ancestry. For us, we look at ancestry as a matter of going back to your roots for emotional, psychological recreational or curiosity reasons, not them...Genealogy then becomes absolutely critical. It isn't the only credential of the Messiah because there were many who could trace their lineage back. As I said, even the Rabbi Hillel was of the line of David. That doesn't make him the Messiah. There were many others in the line of David. That isn't the only credential but it is one that is essential because while it can't affirm you as the Messiah, the absence of it could discredit you as the Messiah. And so it's important for Luke to include the credentials of the Messiah. (From Sermon - [The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

## GENEALOGY OF JESUS IN GOSPELS OF LUKE & MATTHEW

Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

### TWO GENEALOGIES: Matthew Thru Joseph Luke Thru Mary

**John MacArthur** gives a lucid discussion of why Matthew's genealogy is through Joseph and Luke's genealogy is through Mary - it hinges especially on the fact that there are two grandfathers mentioned for Jesus. Read his interesting account...

Now there are some differences in the names in the two records (Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3)...In Matthew's genealogy and in Luke's genealogy we have different names in the records. Now let me... Let me help you to see what I'm saying. Luke traces Jesus' line back to David through Nathan. Look at Lk 3:31, "**Son of Nathan, son of David.**" Now Nathan was David's third son born to Bathsheba. You remember Bathsheba? Okay, Nathan was her third son...David's third son, I should say, born to Bathsheba. So this line in Luke goes back to David through his son, Nathan. But the first son born to Bathsheba was whom? **Solomon**. And the genealogy in Matthew goes back through Solomon. **So in Matthew's genealogy you go back through Solomon to David. In Luke's genealogy you go back through Nathan to David. So you have two different lines.** You have one being all the people who came out of Solomon...another, all the people who came out of Nathan. Secondly, Matthew identifies Jesus' grandfather as a man named **Jacob** (Mt 1:16). It says Jesus' earthly father was Joseph and his (Joseph's) father was Jacob. But Luke 3:23 says that Jesus' grandfather's name is **Eli, or Heli**....Now this is a difference. So you've got two sons of David. That's different. And you've got two grandfathers of Jesus, one being **Jacob** in the genealogy of Matthew, one being **Eli** in the genealogy of Luke. Both are royal lines because both come out of David. Solomon comes out of David, Nathan comes out of David. You have both those royal lines. Interestingly, from David to Abraham the genealogy of Matthew and Luke are identical. From David back to Abraham, the names are the same. But from David down, the names are completely different. When you read the genealogy in Matthew 1 and you go Joseph, Jacob, you go through a list of names back to Solomon. Then you come here, you read Eli, and you go through a list of names back to Nathan. Those lists are completely different names. So what you have then is two genealogies, right? They have two grandfathers, going back to two sons of David with different names. Very simple, **you have two genealogies.** You'd be amazed how people struggle to try to explain that. I don't know what the struggle is all about. Everybody has two genealogies like that. One is maternal and one is paternal. In Matthew you have the genealogy of Joseph through his father Jacob back to David through Solomon. In Luke you have the gene...genealogy of Mary through her father, Eli. So Jesus, like everybody, had two grandfathers. He had a paternal grandfather through his father named Jacob. He had a grandfather through his mother named Eli. Now it's very important to note this. What you have then in Matthew is the genealogy of Jesus back through Joseph. In Luke is the genealogy of Jesus back through Mary.

Now that is the simplest explanation of the differences in the names. The names are the same once you hit David because all you have to do is go back to David to prove the royal blood. That's where it starts. The names are the same from David to Abraham. They're different because they come through Solomon on



Joseph's side, and through Nathan on Mary's side. It's that simple.

Now was this important? Absolutely important because: Anybody who ascended to the throne got the legal right to the throne through his father, through his father. Even if there was an adoption the father still made that son a legal son by adoption. And Jesus could only receive the right to rule through His father. Genealogical records were traced through the males. That's why there are no females listed in Luke's genealogy. There are no females listed in the entire seventy-seven names because they come through the males. Even though it's Mary's genealogy, no female is mentioned, not even Mary is mentioned, and I'll explain that in a moment because that was not the form in a classic genealogy..... Jesus, though He was not the human son of Joseph, received His legal right to the throne from His adopted father, Joseph. Joseph was considered the true father of Jesus when he was the husband of Mary, even though Jesus was not His son physically. Because he married Mary whose son Jesus was, he became the legal father of Jesus. Therefore, from Joseph Jesus receives the legal right to the throne. It's interesting, just as a footnote. In that line from Solomon there's a name of a man, Jeconiah. Jeconiah was cursed and the curse on Jeconiah is in Jeremiah 22:24-30 and it says, "Jeconiah is cursed and no son of his will ever sit on the throne of Israel, ever." That's interesting because that's Joseph's line. Isn't that amazing? No son of his ever did sit on the throne. Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He did receive the legal right but he was not the natural child. So the curse was intact. (See another source - [What is the curse of Jeconiah?](#))

Now, Luke then gives the genealogy of Mary back through Nathan, Solomon's brother. Matthew gives the paternal, Luke the maternal. Matthew goes Joseph, Jacob, Solomon, David and Luke goes Mary, Eli, Nathan, David. And again, the legal right comes from the father but somebody might want to argue that, somebody might want to say, yeah, yeah, that's the way we've done it, yeah we agree, adoption, etc., etc. But in the case of the Messiah, it's got to be the li... It's got to be the blood of David, he's got to be a blue blood. He's got to have the real stuff.

And so, here is the genealogy of Mary which Luke gives under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to prove not only does He have the legal right to rule through His father, but He has the blood of David in his veins because of His mother. So either way, He is a descendant of David. He can be King legally through Joseph. He can be King naturally through Mary. The credentials are clear, they are detailed and they are irrefutable.....

Now I take a little time with this because you'll notice something. This is the genealogy of Mary but she's not mentioned. And I think that's what trips up some people. They say, "Is this the genealogy of Mary? She's not mentioned." No, Luke takes the classic form of genealogical record and he keeps it male. There aren't any women named in the entire genealogy, not even Mary. So he has to skip. Now a virgin birth is a one-time deal so there's no formula for how you do this, right? How do you do a genealogy when there was no father? So Luke has to invent a way to do that. He doesn't mention Mary. He wants to stick to the male approach so the first male in the line would be Jesus' grandfather on the maternal side, right? The first male would be Mary's father, and that's Eli, or Heli, so he jumps immediately to that and then traces the line all the way back through Nathan. And he sticks with the typical classic form of genealogical recording through only the male.....

What strikes me as curious is, you study the entire New Testament, you never, ever, ever find anyone making the claim that Jesus didn't come from David, never. They never brought it up. It was never an issue. And believe me, they would have wanted it to become an issue but the records indicated that He was in fact as He claimed to be, a Son of David and they couldn't bring it up because it was the truth. Certainly in all their evil imaginations against Jesus, in all their attempts to discredit Him and do away with Him, they would have looked at those genealogical records and, I'm sure they did, and it only was verified that He did indeed descend from David through the line of His father, Joseph, his legal father, and through the bloodline of His mother, Mary, His true human mother. Maybe they would have said, "Well, you know, those believers in Jesus, they claim He was virgin born, that He was virgin born. So maybe that disqualifies the Joseph side of the thing, we'll check on Mary." Well, Mary was from David, too. There never was a denial of that. In fact, in Matthew 21:9, a famous day, we call it Palm Sunday, Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem and the whole population was there. And you know it was the time of the great feast. They were all gathered there. You remember what happened as He came in. This is what they said, "The multitudes" Matthew 21:9 "and those following after crying out, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'" Never a question, never a question; through His father legally, through His mother naturally. ([The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

**ANSWER** - Jesus' genealogy is given in two places in Scripture: Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-38. Matthew traces the genealogy from Jesus to Abraham. Luke traces the genealogy from Jesus to Adam. However, there is good reason to believe that Matthew and Luke are in fact tracing entirely different genealogies. For example, Matthew gives Joseph's father as Jacob (Matthew 1:16), while Luke gives Joseph's father as Heli (Luke 3:23). Matthew traces the line through David's son Solomon (Matthew 1:6), while Luke traces the line through David's son Nathan (Luke 3:31). In fact, between David and Jesus, the only names the genealogies have in common are Shealtiel and Zerubbabel (Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27).

Some point to these differences as evidence of errors in the Bible. However, the Jews were meticulous record keepers, especially in regard to genealogies. It is inconceivable that Matthew and Luke could build two entirely contradictory genealogies of the same lineage. Again, from David through Jesus, the genealogies are completely different. Even the reference to Shealtiel and Zerubbabel likely refer to different individuals of the same names. Matthew gives Shealtiel's father as Jeconiah while Luke gives Shealtiel's father as Neri. It would be normal for a man named Shealtiel to name his son Zerubbabel in light of the famous individuals of those names (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah).

One explanation, held by the church historian Eusebius, is that Matthew is tracing the primary, or biological, lineage while Luke is taking into account an occurrence of "levirate marriage." If a man died without having any sons, it was tradition for the man's brother to marry the widow and have a son who would carry on the deceased man's name. According to Eusebius's theory, Melchi (Luke 3:24) and Matthan (Matthew 1:15) were married at different times to the same woman (tradition names her Estha). This would make Heli (Luke 3:23) and Jacob (Matthew 1:15) half-brothers. Heli then died without a son, and so his (half-)brother Jacob married Heli's widow, who gave birth to Joseph. This would make Joseph the "son of Heli" legally *and* the "son of Jacob" biologically. Thus, Matthew and Luke are both recording the same genealogy (Joseph's), but Luke follows the legal lineage while Matthew follows the biological.

Most conservative Bible scholars today take a different view, namely, that Luke is recording Mary's genealogy and Matthew is recording Joseph's. Matthew is following the line of Joseph (Jesus' legal father), through David's son Solomon, while Luke is following the line of Mary (Jesus' blood relative), through David's son Nathan. Since there was no Greek word for "son-in-law," Joseph was called the "son of Heli" by marriage to Mary, Heli's daughter. Through either Mary's or Joseph's line, Jesus is a descendant of David and therefore eligible to be the Messiah. Tracing a genealogy through the mother's side is unusual, but so was the virgin birth. Luke's explanation is that Jesus was the son of Joseph, "so it was thought" (Luke 3:23).

#### Luke 3:24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

### MESSIAH'S FAMILY TREE

Note that "son" is not in Greek but added throughout this list. MacArthur makes a good point - It is added to help us but it could be grandson. It's the one of so-and-so, then the one born of so-and-so, then the one born of so-and-so. But it leaves us a little bit of leeway to allow for **grandsons** and great grandsons and to expand the genealogy a little bit. Some names are skipped in the genealogies.

**Bible Knowledge Commentary:** Verses 23-38 list 76 names including Jesus and Adam and excluding God. Contrary to Matthew's genealogy, Luke's genealogy begins with Jesus and works back to God. Matthew began with Abraham and worked forward to Jesus in three sets of 14 generations. Other differences exist between the two genealogies. Luke included 20 names prior to Abraham, and he stated that Adam was "the son of God." In addition Luke's and Matthew's lists from David to Shealtiel (during the time of the Exile) differ. That is because the lists trace different lines. Luke traced David's line through Nathan, whereas Matthew traced it through Solomon. (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels](#))

**Son of Matthat** - transliterated from the Hebrew Matthat, meaning gift of God, two persons in the genealogy of Jesus - (1) the father of Eli in the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:24); (2) the father of Jorim in the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:29) Nothing else is known of him.

**Son of Levi** - transliterated from the Hebr. Lēwī (03878), joining. Of course not the third son of Jacob (Ge 29:34) or a tax collector

and one of the twelve apostles, but the Son of Melchi. Nothing else is known of him.

**Son of Melchi**- transliterated from the Hebrew Melchi, meaning my king. The father of Levi (Lk 3:24), father of Neri (Lk 3:28).

**Son of Jannai**- transliterated from the Hebrew Janna, meaning whom Jehovah bestows. Nothing else is known of him.

**Son of Joseph** - Common name in Israel, transliterated from the Hebrew Yōsēph (03130), may God add. Joseph, the name of seven persons in the NT. . Nothing else is known of this Joseph.

#### Luke 3:25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Mattathias** - Nothing else known.

**Amos** - transliterated from the Hebrew 'Āmōts (0531). Amos, meaning strong. Nothing else known.

**Nahum** - transliterated from the Hebr. Nachūm (05151), comfort. Nothing else known.

**Hesli (Esli)** - transliterated from the Hebr. Esli, meaning reserved by Jehovah. Nothing else known.

**Naggai** - Nagge, meaning shining. Nothing else known.

#### Luke 3:26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda

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- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Maath** - transliterated from the Hebrew Maath, meaning small.

**Mattathias** - Nothing else known.

**Semein** - transliterated from the Hebrew Shime'ī (08096), renowned. Semei or Shemei

**Josech** - Nothing else known.

**Joda** - Nothing else known.

**Son of Joseph** - Common name in Israel, transliterated from the Hebrew Yōsēph (03130), may God add. Joseph, the name of seven persons in the NT. . Nothing else is known of this Joseph.

#### Luke 3:27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri

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- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Joanan** - Nothing else known.

**Rhesa** - Nothing else known.

**Zerubbabel** - Mt 1:12. Governor of Judea appointed by the Persians when the Jews returned from Babylonian exile. He supervised the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 3:2, 8).

**Shealtiel** - Salathiel. Most modern English translations use the OT form of the name (Shealtiel, Ezra 3:2). 1 Chr 3:17 identifies Jeconiah as the father of Shealtiel. The judgment on Jeconiah's line (Jer 22:30) may be reflected here.

**MacArthur** - The names from **Eli** (v. 23) to **Rhesa** (v. 27) and from **Neri** (v. 27) to **Mattatha** (v. 31) do not appear anywhere else in Scripture. All that can be said of them is that they were common Jewish names of the time. The names of Zerubbabel and Shealtiel sandwiched in between are known; in fact, they are the only two names after David's time that are common to both the genealogies of Luke and Matthew. It is possible that the names refer to different individuals, and that there was a father named Shealtiel and a son named Zerubbabel in both genealogies. Or a levirate marriage may account for their presence in both genealogies. Zerubbabel himself may have been the child of a levirate marriage, since 1 Chronicles 3:19 lists Pedaiah as his father, while the Old Testament elsewhere calls him the son of Shealtiel (e.g., Ezra 3:2; Neh. 12:1; Hag. 1:1), the brother of Pedaiah (1 Chron. 3:17–18). Similarly, Luke refers to Neri as the father of Shealtiel, while 1 Chronicles 3:17 lists Jeconiah as his father. Again, this is either another case of levirate marriage, or adoption. (See more discussion in his sermon - [The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

#### Luke 3:28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er

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- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Son of Melchi**- transliterated from the Hebrew Melchi, meaning my king. The father of Levi (Lk 3:24), father of Neri (Lk 3:28).

**Addi** - Nothing else known.

**Cosam** - Nothing else known.

**Elmadam** - Nothing else known.

#### Luke 3:29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi

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- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Son of Matthat** - transliterated from the Hebrew Matthat, meaning gift of God, two persons in the genealogy of Jesus - (1) the father of Eli in the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:24); (2) the father of Jorim in the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:29) Nothing else is known of him.

**Son of Levi** - transliterated from the Hebr. Lēwī (03878), joining. Of course not the third son of Jacob (Ge 29:34) or a tax collector and one of the twelve apostles, but the Son of Melchi. Nothing else is known of him.

#### Luke 3:30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Son of Joseph** - Common name in Israel, transliterated from the Hebrew Yōsēph (03130), may God add. Joseph, the name of seven persons in the NT. . Nothing else is known of this Joseph.

### Luke 3:31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David

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- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
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## MESSIAH SON OF DAVID

**Nathan** - 2Sa 5:14 1Ch 3:5 14:4 Zec 12:12 David's third son, born to him in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:14); he is not to be confused with Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 7:2).

**NET Note** - The use of **Nathan** here as the son of David is different than Matthew, where Solomon is named. Nathan was David's third son. It is not entirely clear what causes the difference. Some argue Nathan stresses a prophetic connection, but it is not clear how (through confusion with the prophet Nathan?). Others note the absence of a reference to Jeconiah later, so that here there is a difference to show the canceling out of this line. The differences appear to mean that Matthew's line is a "royal and physical" line, while Luke has a "royal and legal" line.

**Son of David** - The mention of David begins a series of agreements with Matthew's line. The OT background is 1 Chr 2:1–15 and Ruth 4:18–22. (**NET Note**)

**John MacArthur** - By the way, none of those names, except Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, appear in Matthew's genealogy. So that's the only place the lines crossed. They're two distinct lines, one back to Nathan, one back to Solomon. Once you hit David in Lk 3:31, the names become the same in both genealogies from David all the way back to Abraham. Abraham is indicated in Lk 3:34. So when you go from David to Abraham, it's the same as Matthew's genealogy. And, of course, Matthew's genealogy stops at Abraham and so after Abraham you go back, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, you go all the way back, Lk 3:38, Enosh, Seth, Adam, God. And that's basically the flow of the genealogy. From Neri to Nathan are names we don't know anything about. In fact, from Heli back the only names we know or recognize are Zerubbabel and Shealtiel all the way back. But when we hit David, the names are very familiar because the names from David to Abraham are recorded in the Bible so we know those names. ([The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

### Luke 3:32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "son" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Son of Jesse** - Ru 4:18-22 1Sa 17:58 20:31 1Ki 12:16 1Ch 2:10-15 Ps 72:20 Isa 11:1,2 Mt 1:3-6 Ac 13:22,23

**Obed** - Mt 1:5. Ru +4:17. Nu 1:7. 2:3. 7:12. 1 Ch 2:11, 12

**Boaz** - Ruth 2:1; Ruth 2:3; Ruth 2:4; Ruth 2:5; Ruth 2:8; Ruth 2:11; Ruth 2:14; Ruth 2:15; Ruth 2:19; Ruth 2:23; Ruth 3:2; Ruth 3:7; Ruth 4:1; Ruth 4:5; Ruth 4:8; Ruth 4:9; Ruth 4:13; Ruth 4:21; 1 Ki. 7:21; 1 Chr. 2:11; 1 Chr. 2:12; 2 Chr. 3:17; Matt. 1:5; Lk. 3:32

**Salmon** - Ruth 4:20; Ruth 4:21; 1 Ch 2:51, 54. Matt. 1:4; Matt. 1:5; Lk. 3:32

**NET Note** - The reading Σαλά (Sala, "Sala") is found in the best and earliest witnesses (?4 κ\* B sys sa). Almost all the rest of the MSS (2κ A D L Θ Ψ 0102 [f1, 13] 33 ? latt syp,h bo) have Σαλμών (Salmōn, "Salmon"), an assimilation to Matt 1:4–5 and 1 Chr 2:11 (LXX). "In view of the early tradition that Luke was a Syrian of Antioch it is perhaps significant that the form Σαλά appears to embody a Syriac tradition" (TCGNT 113).

**Nahshon** - Ex 6:23. Nu 1:7. 2:3. 7:12, 17. 10:14. Mt 1:4.

**Luke 3:33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah**

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- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
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Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**NET Note** - The number and order of the first few names in this verse varies greatly in the MSS. The variants which are most likely to be original based upon external evidence are Amminadab, Aram (A D 33 565 [1424] pm lat); Amminadab, Aram, Joram (K Δ Ψ 700 2542 pm); Adam, Admin, Arni (?4vid 1241 \*κ pc sa); and Amminadab, Admin, Arni (2κ L X [Γ] f13 pc). Deciding between these variants is quite difficult. The reading "Amminadab, Aram" is the strongest externally since it is represented by Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine witnesses, although it is significantly weaker internally because it disrupts the artistic balance of the number of generations and their groups that three names would preserve (see TCGNT 113, fn. 1 for discussion). In this case, the subtle intrinsic arguments that would most likely be overlooked by scribes argues for the reading "Amminadab, Admin, Arni," although a decision is quite difficult because of the lack of strong external support.

**Amminadab** - Ru 4:19,20 1Ch 2:9,10 Matt. 1:4; Luke 3:33

**Admin** - Matt. 1:3, 4; Luke 3:33

**Ram**

**Hezron** (Mt 1:3; Lk 3:33).

**Perez** - Ge 38:29 Ru 4:12 1Ch 2:4,5 9:4

**Judah** - Ge 29:35 49:8, Judah, Mt 1:2

**Luke 3:34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor**

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- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
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Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**NET Note** - The list now picks up names from Gen 11:10–26; 5:1–32; 1 Chr 1:1–26, especially 1 Chr 1:24–26.

**Jacob** - Lk 1:33. Ge 29:35. Mt 1:2. Messianic prophecy in Nu 24:17.

**Isaac**: Ge 21:3 25:26 1Ch 1:34 Mt 1:2 Ac 7:8 Ro 9:6-8. He 11:17-19

**Abraham** - Luke 3:8, 8. Lk 1:55, 73. 13:16, 28. 16:22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30. 19:9. 20:37. Mt 1:1, 2, 17. 3:9, 9. 8:11. 22:32. Mk 12:26. Jn 8:33, 37, 39, 39, 40, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58. Ac 3:13, 25. 7:2, 16, 17, 32. 13:26. Ro 4:1, 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 16. 9:7. 11:1. 2 Co 11:22. Ga 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29. 4:22. He 2:16. 6:13. 7:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9. 11:8, 17. Ja 2:21, 23. 1 P 3:6. Ge 17:5. Ge 12:3. 21:3, 22:18. 26:4. 28:14. Mt 1:1. Lk 1:54, 55. Jn 11:51, 52. Ac 3:25. Ro 4:13. Ga 3:8, 16.

**Terah**: Ge 11:24-32 Jos 24:2 1Ch 1:24-28,

**Nahor** - Ge 11:22

**Luke 3:35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah,**

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Serug:** Ge 11:18-21

**Reu** - Ge 11:18

**Peleg:** Ge 10:25

**Heber:** Ge 11:16,17

**Shelah:** Ge 10:24 11:12-15

**Luke 3:36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,**

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**NET Note** on **Cainan** - It is possible that the name Καϊνώμ (Kainam) should be omitted, since two key MSS,  $\text{?75vid}$  and  $\text{D}$ , lack it. But the omission may be a motivated reading: This name is not found in the editions of the Hebrew OT, though it is in the LXX, at Gen 11:12 and 10:24. But the witnesses with this reading (or a variation of it) are substantial:  $\kappa$  B L f1 33 (Καϊνώμ), A  $\Theta$   $\Psi$  0102 f13 ? (Καϊνών, Kainan). The translation above has adopted the more common spelling "Cainan," although it is based on the reading Καϊνώμ.

**Shem** : Ge 5:32 7:13 9:18,26,27 10:21,22 11:10-26 1Ch 1:17

**Noah** : Lu 17:27 Ge 5:29,30 6:8-10,22 7:1,23 8:1 9:1 Eze 14:14 Heb 11:7 1Pe 3:20 2Pe 2:5

**Lamech** - Ge 4:18.

**See also**

- [Who were the sons of Noah, and what happened to them and their descendants?](#)
- [What is the biblical account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth?](#)
- [Why did Lamech think Noah would bring comfort \(Genesis 5:29\)?](#)

**Luke 3:37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,**

- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Methuselah:** Ge 5:6-28 1Ch 1:1-3

**Enoch** - He 11:5. Jude 14. Ge +5:21

**Jared** - Ge 5:15

**Mahalaleel** - [NET Note](#) - Here the Greek text reads Mahalaleel. Some modern English translations follow the Greek spelling (NASB, NRSV) while others (NIV) use the OT form of the name (Gen 5:12, 15).

**Cainan** - [NET Note](#) - Greek text has Kainan here. Some modern English translations follow the Greek spelling more closely (NASB, NRSV Cainan) while others (NIV) use the OT form of the name (Kenan in Gen 5:9, 12).

**See also**

- [Who was Methuselah in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Enoch in the Bible?](#)

### Luke 3:38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God

- **son of Adam:** Ge 4:25,26 5:3
- **of God :** Ge 1:26,27 2:7 5:1,2 Isa 64:8 Ac 17:26-29 1Co 15:45,47
- Luke 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 3:23-28 The Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 3:18-20 The Legacy of John the Baptist](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:23-38 The Messiah's Royal Lineage](#) - John MacArthur

Note that "**son**" is not in Greek but added throughout this list.

**Enosh** - Greek Enos, a variant spelling of Enosh. See Ge 4:26, 5:6

**Seth** - third son of Adam and Eve, born after Cain murdered Abel and God banished him (Ge 4:25-26).

**Adam** - Ro 5:14. 1 Co 15:22, 45, 45. 1 Ti 2:13, 14. Jude 14. Ge 2:19. Ge 4:25, 26. 5:3.

**Of God** - Ge 1:26, 27. 2:7. 5:1, 2. Is 64:8. Ac 17:26-29. 1 Co 15:45, 47. He 12:9.

**John MacArthur** summarizes Luke's lineage - Mary's line goes back through all the essential components, all the way back to David, through David back to Abraham, through Abraham back to Adam and even back to God. Just a closing note. Why all of this? It's credentials. But can I just take four of the elements of it and sum up the person of Jesus? Start at the end, Lk 3:38. **He is the Son of God.** He is the Son of God. He goes all the way back to God. Adam was a son of God by creation. And when Adam was created he fully bore the image of God. He was a son of God, a real son of God like God designed men to be sons of God. He bore the image of God unmarred, unspoiled, unpolluted, uncorrupted until he fell into sin. And when Adam sinned, the original image of God was shattered, it was broken and no one has ever entered into the world a true son of God like Adam was, except Jesus. Every one of Adam's descendants has been stained with the sin of Adam and the likeness of God has been corrupted (cf Ro 5:12). But Jesus came into the world fully pleasing God. As God said in Lk 3:22, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He as man was what Adam once was, sinless, perfect man bearing absolutely perfectly the image of God. He was the true Son of God, the truest Son of God that had ever come into the world since Adam. And more than the true Son of God humanly, He is the true Son of God divinely, isn't He? But He is not only Son of God, **He's Son of Adam.** He is like us, tempted, troubled, suffering, persecuted, hated, reviled and killed. He is a son of Adam come all the way down to the pit, not like Adam, He didn't descend into disobedience, He descended into obedience (cf Ro 5:14-18, 19). But He is every bit of what Adam is. He is fully Man in every sense, firmly anchored in heaven as a Son of God. He is also fully anchored to earth as Son of Man; God as to His deity, man as to His humanity. **He is Son of God, son of Adam, deity and humanity. Then He is son of Abraham as to His nationality. That is He is the promised seed.** When God made a promise to Abraham it was to a seed, Galatians 3:16 says, and He is the promised seed who will bring all Abrahamic blessing. And He is also Son of David as to royalty, the promised King who would usher in the glory of all the Davidic promise (cf 2 Sa 7:12, 13). Son of God, son of Adam, son of Abraham, Son of David; He is deity, He is humanity, He is nationality, that is to say He is the One who brings to pass all of Abrahamic promise. He is royalty who will bring in the glorious kingdom promised to David. The hymn writer put it this way. "Oh what a Savior is mine, in Him God's mercies combined, and," said the hymn writer, "He loves me." ([Messiah's Royal Lineage](#))

**Take a moment and worship Jesus, fully God, fully Man,  
As you listen to this great old song "[HE IS!](#)"**

**Life Application Commentary** - Why would Luke take this much space in a document of this length to talk about Jesus' ancestry? Several competing ideas have been suggested, but one thing seems clear: Luke, the careful historian, was anchoring Jesus in



history. He (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 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. ([Luke](#))

**NLT Study Bible on Adam the son of God:** Adam had no earthly father since God created him. In the temptation that follows, Satan repeatedly says to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God....” Adam, the first son of God, failed when tested, but Jesus, the Son of God in the fullest sense, successfully resisted temptation. (See [NLT Parallel Study Bible](#))

**NET Note** - The reference to the son of God here is not to a divine being, but to one directly formed by the hand of God. He is made in God's image, so this phrase could be read as appositional (“Adam, that is, the son of God”). See Acts 17:28–29.

**Kent Hughes on the son of Adam, the son of God** - This ending is one-of-a-kind. There is no parallel in the Old Testament or in rabbinic texts for a genealogy to begin or end with the name of God. Luke’s ending the genealogy in this way shouts for attention. What Luke wants us to understand is that Adam was “the son of God” in the sense that all humans are the offspring of God, just as Paul told the Athenians: “ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’ ” (Acts 17:28). Therefore as the first man, Adam can be referred to as “the son of God.” But Jesus, the eternal Son of God, has become part of the human family and its flawed sonship (flawed because of Adam’s disobedience). The great thing about this is that Jesus exercises his perfect, eternal Sonship as he takes on Adam’s (and our) flawed sonship—and therefore he can redeem it. Paul put it this way: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.... So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). And again in Romans 5:17, “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Henry Morris on son of God** - Adam, like the angels (Job 1:6), is called a son of God for the obvious reason that he (like they) was created, not born.

Christ the Son of God  
Became a son of Adam  
That we sons of Adam  
Might become sons of God.