

## Salvation Comes, and Judgment Follows!

Luke 3:1-20

Berean Baptist Church

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### INTRODUCTION

#### **Luke 3:1-2 The Word of God Returns**

Luke orients everything on Jewish (Herod, Philip, Annas, & Caiaphas) and Roman calendars (Ceasar, Pilate, Trachonitis, & Lysanias) Because something of significance for all of humanity is about to happen.

**Vs 1-2** See how well Luke sets the time for these events. He orients everything on Jewish (Herod, Philip, Annas, & Caiaphas) and Roman calendars (Ceasar, Pilate, Trachonitis, & Lysanias) because of the universal significance of what is happening.

**Vs 2 “while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests”** This is a sharp detail highlighting Luke's skill as a researcher. It sounds like Luke is saying that there were two high priests: Annas and Caiaphas. But normally there is one high priest at a time who serves for life (Lev Ch 21 and Num Ch 35). Caiaphas was officially the high priest and Annas was just his father-in-law.

But the historian Josephus reports that Annas was originally the high priest and the Romans commanded the Jews to select a new high priest. They selected Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, and it seems like Annas was still the one pulling the strings until his death. This is why Jesus is brought to Annas first after his arrest (John 18:13). Technically Caiaphas was the high priest but everyone knew that Annas pulled the strings

**Vs 2 “the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias”** So, there have been occasional flashes of prophecy; we saw Elizabeth, John, Anna, and Simeon. They gave glimpses of light in the darkness, but now the sun is rising. A prophet, a steady bright star is rising to give light to the world for the first time in 400 years.

But he is only the morning star that shines before dawn, this John is only a forerunner of a greater light to come.

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, (Heb 1:1-2)”

**Vs 2 “in the wilderness.”** John's ministry was out in the wild places. He did preach in towns or villages (**Vs 3**) But the heart of his ministry was found in the desert and if you wanted to follow him, and the baptism of repentance, you would have to leave comfortable society.

John preached in the wild because his message was fundamentally against the course of the world.

*Turn away from evil and follow Jesus because He is Savior and Judge!*

#### **Luke 3:3-6 John's Message of Salvation Grounded in the Old Testament**

**Vs 3 “preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,”** John's message was one of

salvation by faith for the repentant, through God's gracious forgiveness. Baptism was a symbol of their repentance and God's forgiveness.

If one would trust God's law and turn their back on evil, then God would freely forgive their evil deeds. And a person forgiven in this way would be washed by immersion as a symbol of their coming out of the wicked world.

John's message looks forward to the complete gospel that Jesus will reveal. So, John's baptism was not Christian baptism but it looked forward to Christian baptism.

## **On Baptism**

“Baptize” is a Greek word meaning “immerse;” John was preaching “an immersion of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3).”

A Christian is baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt 28:19)” It is a symbol of our identification with Jesus' death and resurrection, we die to our sin and are born again to live to God.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom 6:4-5).”

This identification with cleansing, burial, and resurrection is why John baptized by immersion (John 3:23 - “much water”, Matt 3:16 Jesus came “up out of the water”) and why we insist that immersion is the right mode of baptism.

## **V 4-5 John's message grounded in the Old Testament -**

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (Isa 40:3-5).”

These geographic illustrations are best understood as God's work reshaping human hearts and society. But we have reason to think that at Jesus' return He will physically reshape the geography of the holy land (Zac 14:4, Ezk Ch 47).

God is coming, be prepared. His coming will lift many humble and drive down many exalted. Many of the twisted will be made right and much of the rocky ground will be made useful. And in all of this, the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

As another prophet said, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14)."

**Vs 3-6 “all the region...all flesh”** John's message is not just coming to the Hebrews but to all the world.

*Turn away from evil and follow Jesus because He is Savior and Judge – the fulfillment of all promises and warnings in the First Testament!*

## **Luke 3:7-14 John's Message of Salvation to the Respected and the Despised**

All four Gospels speak of John's ministry but Luke pays special attention to the people that John ministered to.

**Vs 7-9** John pulls no punches. Saving faith always produces fruit. John's message to sinners is not that they must earn the place in God's Kingdom (no one can) but that if they don't have the fruit of faith (good works) they should not be confident in their salvation.

The good root (a heart regenerated by God) produces good fruit (such as: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance – Gal 5:22). And an evil root (fallen human nature) produces evil fruit: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21)."

**Vs 11** This is a general message to the audience: if you have more than you need, you should give to those who do not have enough. **“Tunics”** were long fitted garments designed to be worn under other clothes; this is the most basic of clothing.

**Vs 12-13 “Then came also publicans to be baptized,”** The “publicans” or tax collectors were despised by devote Jewish society.

They were contracted by the Roman overlords to collect tribute from the Hebrews and often abused their position to line their pockets.

“Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” The publicans (tax collectors) are not to use tax money to enrich themselves.

**Vs 14** Soldiers “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.” This is another surprise. The soldiers work for the occupying Romans and were the direct representatives of the corrupt world system. But John only tells them to stop abusing their authority and stop robbing people.

*Turn away from evil and follow Jesus by being in the World but not of the World, because Jesus is Savior and Judge!*

### **Luke 3:15-18 John's Message of Salvation in Jesus**

**Vs 15-16** The most important part of John's message is the greater one to come.

**Vs 16 “sandal strap,”** John is very clear, he is much lower than Jesus. There was a Hebrew tradition, already old in John's day, that a slave should not be made to loose another's sandal strap; this was too demeaning even for a slave. The focus of John's ministry was Jesus, not John.

*Christian, specifically if God has called you to preach or teach, get out of the way of the text – emphasize the Word and deemphasize yourself!*

All people in a teaching position at Berean receive specific guidance from me on various issues in teaching. Here is one point of that guidance...

## “ 6. Get Out Of The Way

Every Bible preacher and teacher must be able to get out of the way of their own message. We are called to work hard, prepare, practice, and after all that work, when you stand to teach: you must decrease so Christ may increase. However interesting you are, your message should never be about you. Constantly point people to the text and to God, talk about yourself as little as possible.

*I challenge you to do something very hard (I know it's hard because I've done it several times), record yourself teaching and listen to the recording. Be mindful of how much you refer to yourself.*

A slow lesson about the text is much better than a powerful lesson about you. One way I've improved in this area is to do the extra work of preparing a detailed hand out. That way everyone will know if I'm disorganized or slipping into self-focus; it keeps me honest! :)”

*Christian, use John's humility as a model! Make your life and ministry about Jesus, not you!*

**Vs 16 “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”** The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13).”

The baptism of fire is less clear. Sometimes the presence of the Spirit of God is described as fire. But the context here is of judgment...

**Vs 17** “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.”

Jesus comes as a savior to immerse those who trust Him in the Holy Spirit and gather them to Himself. And, Jesus comes as a judge to immerse sinners in fire and send them to eternal burning.

*Turn away from evil and follow Jesus because He is Savior and Judge!*

## **Luke 3:19-20 The World System's Response**

This is why John preached in the wild – the world system would never accept his message and John's stand for simple truth was dangerous.

## CONCLUSION

### **John's Message to the Non-Christian.**

This is a summary of John's message: Turn from your sins and trust God! He will forgive you and heal your soul. Do not trust in your religious heritage or social status, only a relationship with the living God will save you. And if that repentance and relationship are living, then show it in your life by your works!

Do not delay, trust God because the Messiah is coming to save those who trust Him and to judge those who don't.

John's message was powerful but ours is even more urgent. John's words have been fulfilled. The Messiah, Jesus, has come to save – and now we speed toward His day of Judgment.

“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him...(Jude 14-15).”

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!*

### **John's Message to the Christian**

“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Jude 17-21).”

One thing that we learn here is that standing for the truth is dangerous. John the Baptist was in jail by 29 AD probably got his head cut off in 30 AD.

But living in lies is not any safer!

The archaeological record tells us that Tiberius Caesar died in 37 AD, Pontius Pilate died in 36 AD, Philip the tetrarch died in 34 AD, Herod the tetrarch was dead by 40 AD, Caiaphas the priest died in 36 AD, and Annas was probably dead by 40 AD.

This passage opens with an impressive list of leaders, the kind of people that might expect immortal glory in the pages of history, and also there was a crazy guy that lived in the desert and preached repentance. John's stand for the truth got him killed.

But, as far as we know, every one of those big men of history died within 10 years of John's martyrdom.

John stood with God, made a difference that we still talk about today, died with integrity, and was received as a beloved child of the King.

If any of those great men of history died without putting their faith in Jesus than they are in the agony of hell today, as we sit here, and no closer to peace than they were in the days of their evil life. So much for their moral glory in the pages of history.

Yes, standing for the truth with integrity is dangerous for a moment but being seduced or intimidated by the world system is disastrous forever.

*Arm yourself with this knowledge: You will suffer for doing the right thing consistently and it is worth it!* The most that the evil world system can offer you is a few decades of worthless wealth and meaningless praise.

*And, make Jesus the focus of your ministry! Point people to Him, teach people to depend on Him, and speak of Him more than you talk about you!*

*Turn away from evil and follow Jesus because He is Savior and Judge!*

