

LUKE

Chapter 3

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” 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? 8 Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 9 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.” 10 And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” 11 And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.” 15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, 16 John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” 18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison. 21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

3:1–2 Historians frequently dated an event by giving the year of the ruler's reign in which the event happened. (CSB)

The incarnation of our Lord is a historical event. Luke tells us when the messenger sent ahead (Mal 3:1) began calling out in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

Luke continually relates his account of Jesus' life to known historical facts, inviting readers to see the life of Jesus in historical context. Careful comparisons with contemporary sources demonstrate Luke's accuracy. (TLSB)

3:1 *fifteenth year.* Several possible dates could be indicated by this description, but the date A.D. 25–26 (Tiberius had authority in the provinces beginning in 11) best fits the chronology of the life of Christ. The other rulers named do not help pinpoint the beginning of John's ministry, but only serve to indicate the general historical period. (CSB)

Tiberius – Tiberius' reign was one of great political intrigue and included periodic episodes of famine and inflation. He was an excellent military leader, but a mediocre administrator in spite of his attempts to follow in the steps of Augustus, an emperor known for great achievements at building and administration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Roman sources tell us that Tiberius became co-regent with Augustus in AD 11/12, then sole emperor in AD 14. That time frame suggests that John's ministry began somewhere between AD 26 and 29. (TLSB)

Pontius Pilate. The Roman prefect who then ruled in Judea, Samaria and Idumea. (CSB)

Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman Prefect, or governor, of Judea. Appointed by Tiberius, he reigned from AD 26 to 39. His rule concluded just prior to the accession of Caligula amid a period of tremendous political strife. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Herod tetrarch of Galilee. At the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.), his sons—Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip—were given jurisdiction over his divided kingdom. Herod Antipas became the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (see note on Mt 14:1). (CSB)

Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC to AD 39. When his father (Herod the Great 37-4 BC) died, the kingdom was divided between the sons: Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas. The term "tetrarch" originally referred to one who ruled over a quarter of a region or province. However, it took on a pejorative connotation, implying a petty ruler. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Another son of Herod the Great. Philip ruled areas north and west of Galilee from 4 BC to AD 34. (TLSB)

Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene. Nothing more is known of this Lysanias than that his name has been found in certain inscriptions. (CSB)

Little is clear about this character. Josephus mentions more than one Lysanias. Multiple inscriptions bearing this name have been unearthed. (TLSB)

3:2 *high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.* Annas was high priest from A.D. 6 until he was deposed by the Roman official Gratus in 15. He was followed by his son Eleazar, his son-in-law Caiaphas and then four more sons. Even though Rome had replaced Annas, the Jews continued to recognize his authority (see Jn 18:13; Ac 4:6); so Luke included his name as well as that of the Roman appointee, Caiaphas. (CSB)

Family dominated the Jewish high priesthood for most of Jesus' lifetime and beyond. Remains of Caiaphas's house and his ossuary (bone coffin) have been unearthed. (TLSB)

Originally the high priest served in that office for life. However, the Romans did not allow such terms and appointed high priests by their own authority. The Jews may have gotten around this by having two high priests, but only one in “authority,” who in this case would be Annas. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

word of God. The source of John’s preaching and authority for his baptizing. God’s message came to John as it came to the OT prophets (cf. Jer 1:2; Eze 1:3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1). (CSB)

By placing this narrative in a historical context that is both Roman and Jewish, Luke shows that the word of God that comes to John (ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ) is a significant event in both world and salvation history. “The word of God came to John” is the main clause of the sentence, upon which all the historical phrases and clauses are dependent. It recalls the first words of Jeremiah in the LXX τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ ἐγένετο (Jer 1:1; cf. λόγος, “word,” in Jer 1:2, 4, 11; 13:3; Is 38:4; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1), and places John in the category of a prophet. ῥῆμα, “word,” is a significant term for the proclamation of these words and events now happening, which signal that a new era has dawned. The word of God now comes through John, carrying forward the revelation that began with the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary (Lk 1:37–38). John’s prophetic call places him in the old covenant, but the content of his preaching places him in the new. (CC p. 148)

Zechariah is Hebrew for Yahweh remembered” – and indeed he did! John was to be a principle [layer in God’s holy plan of redemption. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

wilderness. Refers to a desolate, uninhabited area, not necessarily a sandy, waterless place. (CSB)

This evokes memories for the Israelites, especially since the specific locale in the wilderness is the Jordan. The OT prophesied that God would begin his eschatological restoration of Israel in the desert in a new exodus that would transcend Israel’s first wilderness wanderings (e.g., Is. 41:17-20; 43:19-21; Ezek 20:33-38; Hos 2:14-23). (CC p. 148)

God’s Word did not come in an expected manner – with regality to a palace or temple courts. No it came- of all places – in the desert, the wilderness. A word study of “wilderness/desert” often represents the place where God first found, called, and wed His people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

3:3 around the Jordan – This area is also laden with theological connections. When Israel crossed the Jordan River, it was a significant passage from their wilderness wanderings into the Promised Land (Joshua 3). As with the Red Sea crossing, there are also strong baptismal overtones, confirmed by 1 Cor. 10:2: Joshua, like Moses, leads his people across a boundary of water. (CC pp 148-149)

Likely the Judean desert just north of the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

baptism of repentance. John’s baptism represented a change of heart, which includes sorrow for sin and a determination to lead a holy life. (CSB)

John called for a change of heart and a commitment to holy living. This repentance was sealed with a baptism. (TLSB)

John's baptism is a repudiation of the old way of life and a conversion that includes faith that the eschatological era of salvation is dawning. (CC p. 149)

This is the first mention of Baptismos in the NT. John's baptism and ministry were to serve God's people by preparing them for the Messiah's advent. The ministry and Baptism of the Great Commission is intended for all nations and is to remain until Christ's Second Coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

The word Baptismua "baptism" can refer to a variety of religious washings and cleansings. The point of the word and verse is not to prescribe a specific method of baptizing, but to emphasize "total immersion" in repentance and forgiveness. Being "immersed in the Word and the means of grace," has direct baptismal application. Immersion in repentance and forgiveness is the mark that identifies a person's membership in God's kingdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

forgiveness of sins. Christ would deliver the repentant person from sin's penalty by dying on the cross. (CSB)

John's baptism was not "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf 8:12; 22:16) nor in the name of the Trinity (Mt 29:19). Therefore, John's baptism did not initiate people into Jesus, the Trinity, or God's kingdom. It was preparatory. Yet the text states that it had the power to bring those baptized "to the forgiveness of sins," and that forgiveness comes from Jesus. (CC p. 150)

3:4-6 Like the other evangelists (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:2-3), Luke quotes Is 40:3-4 to emphasize that John's work fulfills prophecy by preparing the people for the Messiah's arrival. *all flesh*. In contrast to Mt and Mk, Lk includes the promise of Is 40:5. He underlines a major theme, that Jesus came for both Jews and Gentiles. (TLSB)

3:4 *Prepare the way.* Before a king made a journey to a distant country, the roads he would travel were improved. Similarly, preparation for the Messiah was made in a moral and spiritual way by the ministry of John, which focused on repentance and forgiveness of sin and the need for a Savior. (CSB)

John's baptism enrolled the people in preparatory catechesis that would culminate when Jesus is "taken up" (9:51, a reference to death, resurrection, and ascension) and the Holy Spirit would descend on the church at Pentecost. (CC p. 150)

of the Lord – John's baptism turns the people to the Lord and sets them in motion on the way of the Lord, a journey by grace, a way of new life. This bath of repentance cleansed those baptized so that when holiness would arrive in the person of Jesus, they would be prepared to meet Him. The way of the Lord is a catechetical road, the way of life in the person and works of the Messiah, Jesus. (CC p. 150)

make his paths straight – The vivid language of Is. 40 proclaims that the preparation for this road means dramatic changes in the topography of Israel. (3-6). Luke 3:5 is dependent on 3:4b. Only Luke among the synoptics adds the four images from Is. 40:4 and 40:5b. The Messiah must enter his holy city unimpeded and accomplish his destiny. The road made crooked by brokenness must be made straight through the preaching that calls for repentance, turning from sin to God. (CC pp. 150-51)

3:5 *every valley shall be filled* – God clears it out of the way. Through repentance – contrition and faith – we are made ready. Only after God has finished His preparatory work will all flesh see the salvation of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

3:6 *all flesh*. God’s salvation was to be made known to both Jews and Gentiles—a major theme of Luke’s Gospel (see note on 2:31). (CSB)

An important point can be made about the word *pas*, “all.” The NT contains 406 uses of the word. Of those 27% are in Luke and Acts. This means to corroborate that Luke is profoundly interested in expressing the universality of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is the Savior of all. His love is universal. Christ and the Gospel show no partiality to race or social status. All flesh will see the salvation of God! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Ezekiel 18:23 “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”

1 Timothy 2:4 “who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”

3:7 *brood of vipers* – A brood is a group of in this case baby snakes. Another name for them was “Children of Satan. Literally: “offspring of snakes.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Offspring of poisonous snakes, which often function as symbols of deception and malice (cf Is 59:4–5). (TLSB)

wrath to come. A reference to both the destruction of Jerusalem (21:20–23), which occurred in A.D. 70, and the final judgment (Jn 3:36). (CSB)

Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the final judgment on the Last Day. (TLSB)

Just as snakes in brush piles flee when the pile is set on fire, so also these crowds run to him in the desert in the face of God’s impending wrath. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

3:8 *bear fruit in keeping with repentance* – The fruits of faith give evidence that repentance has taken place. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Gk *metanoia*, “a change of mind.” (TLSB)

we have Abraham as our father – The Pharisees and Sadducees, named in Matthew’s gospel, would have found it most difficult to submit to John’s baptism because they believed that they already had been grafted into Abraham’s covenant through circumcision. One Jesus’ severest criticisms of the Pharisees’ oral law will involve these kinship laws. Jesus will show that membership in the kingdom (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant) is through faith, not through bloodlines and genealogy. St Paul will affirm this point in Romans 1-4, citing Gen 15:6 in Rom. 4:3. (CC p. 152)

these stones – Gentiles were considered stones, and John is saying that God can create Jews out of Gentiles by means of John’s baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins. (CC p. 152)

Wordplay in Aram; these two words have a similar sound. John derisively dismissed spiritual blessing based on race. (TLSB)

3:9 *ax ... at the root.* A symbolic way of saying that judgment is near for those who give no evidence of repentance. (CSB)

John warns that the axe is laid to the root of the tree that does not bear good fruit and this tree will be thrown into the fire. God's wrath is beginning to be poured out already now in the ministry of John. It will reach a climax with the death of Jesus. (CC p. 152)

Stresses the urgency of John's call to repentance and the reality of God's judgment. Cf Is 10:33-34; Jer 46:22-23. God described Israel as an unproductive vine coming under His judgment in Is 5:1-7. (TLSB)

fire. A symbol of judgment (Mt 7:19; 13:40-42). (CSB)

Fire is one of the themes of John's preaching, and this is its first use in this passage (see 3:16-17). Fire suggests the wrath and judgment of God, a common expression in the OT (Jer 11:16; 21:14; 22:7; Ezek 15:6-7). In the Qumran scrolls, God's eschatological wrath is likened to overflowing "rivers of Belial [Satan]" and to "a consuming fire in all its streams, to destroy every tree, green and dry, from its banks." This combines the imagery of fire and water poured out in God's final judgment to consume trees—a combination similar to that found in Lk 3:7, 9. (CC)

3:10 *what shall then do* – Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν—The aorist subjunctive is deliberative. There is an urgency to their question. (CC p. 146)

More than simply feeling sorrow and remorse, the truly penitent seek a godly alternative to sinful living. (TLSB)

To commit to or cause to happen. – They are asking a catechetical question, similar to Luther's response to the commandments, "What does this mean?" All of Israel should be asking this urgent question in view of John's ministry, especially the Pharisees and the religious establishment of Jerusalem. But only the tax collectors and soldiers are the only ones to come asking. (CC p. 153)

Many in the crowd – particularly the tax collectors and soldier – probably were "unchurched" and simply ignorant. They needed the third use of the Law to guide their new man of faith in sanctified living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

More than simply feeling sorrow and remorse, the truly penitent seek a godly alternative to sinful living. (TLSB)

3:11 *two tunics.* A tunic was something like a long undershirt. Since two such garments were not needed, the second should be given to a person in need of one (see 9:3). (CSB)

Worn under the cloak. In counseling his hearers to share, John anticipates Jesus' command (12:32-34) and the practice of the Early Church (Ac 2:44-45; 4:34-37). (TLSB)

John enjoins charity in the basics of food and clothing. The Kiton was an undergarment worn over the bare body beneath an outer coat. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

This anticipates Jesus' instructions to the Twelve about two cloaks and other provisions; they are to be dependent on the Lord of the harvest to provide for them (9:3). (CC p. 154)

3:12 *Tax collectors.* Taxes were collected for the Roman government by Jewish agents, who were especially detested for helping the pagan conqueror and for frequently defrauding their own people. (CSB)

τελῶναι—Only Luke among the evangelists describes tax collectors and other sinners coming to be baptized by John (3:10–14). This exclusive Lukan material prepares for Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors. In 5:27, Luke emphasizes Levi's character as "tax collector," i.e., sinner, highlighting Jesus' table fellowship *with sinners*. In 7:29 and 7:34, Luke again places the tax collectors in the center of Jesus' table fellowship as those who accept him as the Messiah prophesied in the OT. In 15:2, the murmuring Pharisees lay down a charge against Jesus that sums up their opinion of his table fellowship: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." The opposition of the Pharisees to the tax collectors comes to a head in 18:9–14 in the unique Lukan parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Luke's final use of "tax collector" in 19:2 is to call Zacchaeus a "chief tax collector" (ἀρχιτελώνης), and Jesus' exhortations to Zacchaeus as to how to amend his sinful life are similar to John's exhortations to these tax collectors. (CC p. 146)

3:13 *collect no more than you are authorized* – John's answer supports Luther's doctrine of vocation. John does not tell them to abandon their professions, but to serve God honestly in their present station in life. Tax collectors were prone to charging more than the government commanded. Soldiers often accompanied tax collectors; they were underpaid and prone to excessive violence. John commands that they not "extort" (διασεῖο, "shake violently" – a "shake down) but be honest and content. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

3:14 *soldiers.* Limited military forces were allowed for certain Jewish leaders and institutions (such as those of Herod Antipas, the police guard of the temple, and escorts for tax collectors). The professions of tax collector and soldier as such were not condemned, but the common unethical practices associated with them were. (CSB)

Jewish temple guards or even Romans. Detail anticipates Ac, when numerous soldiers convert to Christianity (Ac 10; 16:25–34). Luther: "He did not condemn their office or advise them to stop doing their work.... He praised the military profession, but at the same time he forbade its abuse. ... Therefore even under the New Testament the sword is established by God's word and commandment, and those who use it properly and fight obediently serve God and are obedient to his word" (AE 46:97–98). (TLSB)

3:15 *people were in expectation* – προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ—The first of two genitive absolutes describes one circumstance surrounding John's words to the people in 3:16–17. Like both Simeon (2:25) and Anna (2:38), the people are waiting expectantly for something to happen in connection with John's preaching. This alerts the hearer to the heightened messianic expectations brought on by John's baptism and to recognize their climax when Jesus is baptized. Ὁ λαός as a term for God's people, (CC p. 146)

John's resemblance to Elijah (cf 1:17) suggested to some that he might be the Messiah. (TLSB)

all were questioning – διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν ... ὁ Χριστός—The second genitive absolute is more specific about the reaction of the people to John’s words. The internal debate among the Jews was about whether John was the Christ. His preaching and eschatological washing made such a conclusion probable. (CC p. 146)

This verse, unique to Luke, creates a kind of pregnant literary pause, heightening the suspense. The people “wait expectantly” and “ponder in their hearts” (dislogizomai also of Mary in 1:29). Could John perhaps be the Christ they were looking for? (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

3:16 *who is mightier...strap of whose sandals...not worthy to untie* – In Ruth 4, when Boaz redeems Ruth, he receives the sandal from the next of kind of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech, who was not willing to buy her back. The receiving of the sandal by Boaz from the next of kin was a testimony that he had bought her back. Luke tells us that the people were wondering if John “was the Christ” (3:15). John responds that he is not the Christ and says that he is not worthy to untie Jesus’ sandal and receive it as the one worthy of buying back humanity. John may be the “next of kin” from the perspective of the OT, but Jesus is the Redeemer. Curiously, there may be another oblique reference to Jesse (cf. 3:9) in that Boaz and Ruth give birth to Obed, who is the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:17). Jesse’s place in the genealogy becomes heightened. (CC p. 154)

baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Fulfilled at Pentecost (Ac 1:5; 2:4, 38). (CSB)

and with fire. Here fire is associated with judgment (v. 17). See also the fire of Pentecost (Ac 2:3) and the fire of testing (1Co 3:13). (CSB)

Thus by Pentecost, Jesus has been baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. He has undergone this baptism as the substitute for all. After Pentecost, Christian Baptism is based on Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion. The post-Pentecost baptizing by Jesus’ apostles incorporates people into Christ, his death and life. In this, Christ may be said to be the Baptizer. Those baptized into Christ are baptized with the Spirit and fire with which he was baptized. John’s baptism cleanses with water, but Jesus’ baptism cleanses with the Holy Spirit and fire, alluding to Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan (the Holy Spirit) and his “baptism” on the cross, where God’s fiery wrath is laid upon him (12:49–50). Jesus’ own baptism and atoning death make possible the baptism in the Spirit and tongues of fire at Pentecost. Jesus is the more powerful one, and his baptism in Spirit and fire initiates the people into God’s end-time kingdom. When this post-Pentecost Christian Baptism comes, John’s catechesis ends (cf. Acts 19:1–7), for the road out of the wilderness to Jerusalem has been traveled by Jesus, whose death and resurrection make it possible for all flesh to see the salvation of God (Lk 3:6). (CC p. 155)

That’s what water and fire have in common – they purify. Water cleans the outside, and fire purifies the inside – perfectly pure. When Jesus enters the water, perfect purity has been connected through Baptism. When the Lord enters our lives through Baptism, the perfect purity of grace has entered our lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:17 *His winnowing fork.* The chaff represents the unrepentant and the wheat the righteous. Many Jews thought that only pagans would be judged and punished when the Messiah came, but John declared that judgment would come to all who did not repent—including Jews. (CSB)

κατακαύσει πυρί ἀσβέστω—The final reference to fire as unquenchable is the most graphic, heightening the eschatological wrath of God upon those who do not greet the Messiah when He comes. (CC p. 147)

Fire suggests wrath and judgment of God, a common expression in the OT. In the Qumran scrolls, God's eschatological wrath is likened to ... "a consuming fire in all its streams, to destroy every tree, green and dry, from its banks. The enemies of God, will be hurled into everlasting destruction. One sees in this brief account of John's preaching that he proclaimed both Law and Gospel and that his words, cast in a picturesque form, must have proved gripping. It is clear that he did not preach an easygoing religiousness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:19 *Herod ... had been reprov'd...for Herodias.* Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas IV of Arabia, but divorced her to marry his own niece, Herodias, who was already his brother's (Herod Philip's) wife (see Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17). (CSB)

After Herod Antipas divorced his wife and took Herodias (his niece and former wife of his brother Philip), John denounced him. This led to John's imprisonment and eventual execution (cf Mk 6:14–29). (TLSB)

3:20 *locked John up in prison.* According to Josephus, John was imprisoned in Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea (*Antiquities*, 18.5.2). This did not occur until sometime after the beginning of Jesus' ministry (see Jn 3:22–24), but Luke mentions it here in order to conclude his section on John's ministry before beginning his account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry (see also Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14). He later briefly alludes to John's death (9:7-9). (CSB)

προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πάντι - Of all Herod's sins, which were many, the arrest, imprisonment and execution of John were the worst. This placed John in the category of prophet rejected to the point of death, just like Jesus. (CC p. 147)

3:21 *baptized.* Though Jesus did not need to receive Baptism in order to be forgiven, he nonetheless submitted to it. (TLSB)

One cannot understand the gospels or the Christian Gospel without first understanding the baptism of Jesus. Jesus now takes humanity's place to receive the wrath of God against sin. The first step in the fulfillment of John's prediction that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and *with fire* (3:16) is attained with Jesus' baptism. From this moment, Jesus stands in solidarity with sinful humanity. He, therefore, stands for us under the wrath of God, wrath that will culminate in his crucifixion for the sins of the world. The placement of this wrath upon Jesus in his baptism is prepared for by John's baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins (3:3) and his preaching of the coming wrath of God (3:7–9, 16–17). God's wrath burns the chaff in an unquenchable fire (3:17). Jesus takes his place as a sinner alongside of sinners, even though he has committed no sin. He subjects himself to the fire of divine wrath (cf. 12:49–50). Jesus' ministry is framed by two baptisms: his baptism in water and Spirit begins his journey to his bloody "baptism" on the cross (12:49–50). The presence of the Trinity at Jesus' baptism affirms that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is the one chosen to accomplish the messianic task of substitutionary atonement on the cross. (CC)

Christian Baptism is into Christ and continues the pattern of Christ's baptism with water (in the Jordan), with the Spirit, and with fire (his bloody "baptism" on the cross). Thus it is connected with "the total redemptive action which the baptism of Jesus set in motion." Christian Baptism,

like Christ's own baptism, is trinitarian. It effects union with Christ and gives the Spirit, and so what the Father said of Jesus he also says of every person baptized into Christ: "This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." (CC)

as he was praying. Only Luke notes Jesus' praying at the time of his baptism. Jesus in prayer is one of the special themes of Luke (see 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 22:32, 41; 23:34, 46). (CSB)

Detail mentioned only by Luke, who emphasized prayer in Jesus' ministry (5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 22:32, 41; 23:34, 46). (TLSB)

Luke pictures Jesus as praying more often than the other evangelists. Jesus prays at significant moments in his ministry, e.g. before the Sermon on the Plain (6:12), at the confession of Peter and the first passion prediction (9:18), at the transfiguration (9:28-29), and before his betrayal (22:41). His final prayer is on the cross, when he cries out "Father into your hands I place my spirit" (23:46) (CC p. 158)

heaven was opened – ἀνεωχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανόν—This is a theological passive that has God as its subject, i.e., "the heaven was opened" by God. (CC)

The opening of heaven at Jesus' baptism means that it will forever be opened to all humanity through the flesh of Christ by the Spirit of Christ. (CC p. 159)

3:22 *Holy Spirit descended.* Luke specifies "in bodily form." To John, it was a sign. (CSB)

καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον—Only Luke has "Holy Spirit" (Mt 3:16: "Spirit of God"; Mk 1:10: "Spirit"), conforming to his reference to the Holy Spirit in 3:16. Luke refers to the Holy Spirit more often than the other gospels. (CC)

The appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove recalls Gen. 1:2, when the Spirit hovered over the waters in the first creation. The dove also recalls Noah after the flood (Gen. 8:8) (CC p. 161)

You are my son, whom I love. See Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1; Heb 1:5. Two other times the Gospel writers record the declarations of a voice from heaven addressing Jesus: (1) on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:35), and (2) in the temple area during Jesus' final week (Jn 12:28). (CSB)

When the Father announces, "You are my Son, the beloved, in you I am well pleased" (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα), he speaks from Scripture, citing Ps 2:7, which some manuscripts include here. But ἀγαπητός, "beloved," may also refer to Gen 22:2, 12, 16, where Isaac is called the "beloved son" (τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν), and God asks for him to be sacrificed. This similarity to Isaac recalls the centrality of the covenant with Abraham (as in the Benedictus) and supports the suggestion that there are *sacrificial* overtones in Jesus' baptism. He begins his substitutionary atonement by condescending to take his place among sinners submitting to a baptism of repentance. A strong sacrificial theme is also apparent from the similarity to Is 42:1, the first verse of the first Suffering Servant Song, preparing for the fourth Isaiah Servant Song, Is 52:13–53:12. The connection to Is 42:1 also includes the placing of the Spirit upon "Jacob, my servant, ... Israel, my chosen one" (Ἰακώβ ὁ παῖς μου ... Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου). That Luke has ἀγαπητός, "beloved," instead of ἐκλεκτός, "elect/chosen one," is not significant, since Luke uses ἐκλελεγμένος, "elect/chosen one" (9:35), instead of ἀγαπητός, "beloved" (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7), at the transfiguration. The Father's goodwill (εὐδοκία), which rests on the "men of his good pleasure" (2:14), is now seen to flow down to the incarnate Son (ἐν σοὶ

εὐδόκησα)—and through him to those who are in him. The Father’s good pleasure with the Son is the source of his good pleasure for those upon whom his favor rests. This good pleasure of the Father will include the fact that the Gospel (proclaimed in the mission of the seventy[-two]), though hidden from the wise, is revealed to babies (10:21; πατήρ . . . εὐδοκία). The Father is also pleased to give the kingdom to the little flock (12:32; εὐδόκησεν ὁ πατήρ). The words of the Father here will be repeated with minor changes at Jesus’ transfiguration just before he turns his face to go to Jerusalem (9:35). (CC)

The Father’s affirmation echoes two messianic prophecies (Ps 2:7; Is 42:1), reinforcing that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. “You must honor Baptism and consider it glorious because of the Word. For God Himself has honored it both by words and deeds. Furthermore, He confirmed it with miracles from heaven. Do you think it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty?” (LC IV 21). (TLSB)

3:23–38 There are several differences between Luke’s genealogy and Matthew’s (1:2–16). Matthew begins with Abraham (the father of the Jewish people), while Luke traces the line in the reverse order and goes back to Adam, showing Jesus’ relationship to the whole human race (see note on 2:31). From Abraham to David, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are almost the same, but from David on they are different. Some scholars suggest that this is because Matthew traces the legal descent of the house of David using only heirs to the throne, while Luke traces the complete line of Joseph to David. A more likely explanation, however, is that Matthew follows the line of Joseph (Jesus’ legal father), while Luke emphasizes that of Mary (Jesus’ blood relative). Although tracing a genealogy through the mother’s side was unusual, so was the virgin birth. Luke’s explanation here that Jesus was the son of Joseph, “so it was thought” (v. 23), brings to mind his explicit virgin birth statement (1:34–35) and suggests the importance of the role of Mary in Jesus’ genealogy. (CC)

Twin genealogies of Jesus appear in the NT, here and in Mt 1:1–17. They differ greatly. First, Luke’s genealogy is given at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, while Matthew’s appears at the beginning of the Gospel. Second, Luke’s genealogy works backward from Joseph, while Matthew’s works forward from Abraham. Third, Luke goes all the way back to Adam and God (v 38), while Matthew traces only back to Abraham. Most scholars believe that these respective arrangements are the result of, and consistent with, each evangelist’s special interests. On this understanding, Luke emphasizes that the Messiah descends from Adam and so is related to all nations, while Matthew focused on Jesus’ Judean roots, which accords with his desire to present Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham. Luke names the actual ancestors of Joseph’s branch of the family. Matthew likely gives a stylized legal line of descent from King David. (TLSB)

Genealogy of Jesus

23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, **24** the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, **25** the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, **26** the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, **27** the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel,[e] the son of Neri, **28** the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, **29** the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, **30** the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, **31** the

son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

3:23 *about thirty years of age.* Luke, a historian, relates the beginning of Jesus' public ministry both to world history (see vv. 1–2) and to the rest of Jesus' life. Thirty was the age when a Levite undertook his service (Nu 4:47) and when a man was considered mature. (CSB)

The genealogy also informs us of the age of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry: “about thirty years” (3:23). Luke often uses numbers with some theological significance. Thirty was the age of David when he began his reign as king of Israel (2 Sam 5:4), so Jesus' age suggests that he is the son of David (Lk 3:31), who will inherit “the throne of his father David” (1:33). Joseph was thirty years old when he began his service to the Pharaoh (Gen 41:46). OT priests and Levites began their public service at the age of thirty. (CC)

A fitting age. Priests began their work at age 30 (Nu 4:3), Ezekiel began his prophetic calling at age 30 (Ezk 1:1), and King David assumed the throne at this age (2Sm 5:4). (TLSB)

as was supposed it was thought. Luke had already affirmed the virgin birth (1:34–35), and here makes clear again that Joseph was not Jesus' physical father. (CSB)

Ἰωσήφ τοῦ Ἠλί—The only name in the genealogy that is not preceded by the genitive article τοῦ is that of Joseph, affirming, once again, the virgin birth. The translation leaves out “of,” making it awkward in English, but making the point that Jesus is not “of” Joseph. (CC)

The best suggestion is that Matthew gives the legal line of descent from David, while Luke names the actual ancestors of Joseph's branch of the family. (CC)

Luke uses the genealogy to show that Jesus is the new Adam and the Son of God (see textual note on 3:23; cf. Rom 5:12–21). Moreover, the hearer of the gospel might even surmise that Luke's placement of the genealogy right after Jesus' baptism is intended to suggest that henceforth Baptism into Christ will be the new birth into the new family of God (cf. Lk 8:19–21). (CC)

Luke signals his theological intent in the frame of the text, by beginning with Jesus and ending with Adam and God, and in the structure of eleven lists of seven names (seventy-seven names in all). Significant names begin some of the lists, i.e., David, Abraham, and Enoch, and the final, seventy-eighth name is God. (Following the variants in various manuscripts results in a shorter genealogy, anywhere from seventy-two to seventy-six names. (CC)

Genesis, the book of generations, is structured around genealogies (of Adam in 5:1ff.; of Noah in 6:9ff.; of Shem in 11:10ff.; of Terah in 11:27ff.; of Isaac in 25:19ff.; of Jacob in 37:2ff.). (Adam, Noah, Shem, Terah, Isaac, and Jacob all appear in Luke's genealogy.) The Genesis genealogies assured the Israelites that the seed of the Messiah was present in their loins. Genesis concludes with a blessing according to genealogical lines that indicates the line of the Messiah (Genesis 49). The hearers of Genesis are surprised that, of Jacob's twelve sons, neither Joseph nor Benjamin

receives the blessing and that the seed of the Messiah does not rest in their descendents but in those of Judah (Gen 49:8–12). Both Matthew (1:2) and Luke refer to Judah, recalling this genealogy from Genesis. Judah had been the spokesman for the brothers when they sold Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:25–28), and he also conceived a child with his daughter-in-law Tamar (38:12–30). By giving the blessing to Judah, an unrighteous brother, instead of the more righteous Joseph or Benjamin, God showed that membership in the genealogy of the Messiah is by grace, not by works. When Jacob blesses Judah, he says that “the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of nations. He tethers his donkey to the vine, and the son of his she-donkey to the shoot. He washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes; his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk” (49:10–12). (CC)

Ch 3 Luke’s account of John’s ministry and Jesus’ ancestry hint at the universal nature of the Messiah’s kingdom. How sad, then, that churches too often show little concern for those outside the immediate boundaries of their fellowship. The Gospel is for everyone! Jesus’ death and resurrection bring life and salvation to all who repent and call on His name. • Lord, open my eyes to the nature of Your kingdom, and so move me to live a life worthy of Your Gospel by reaching out with the Good News that leads to everlasting life. Amen. (TLSB)