

Home Group Helps

Luke 3:1-14

The Ministry of John the Baptist – Part 1

^{ESV} 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.”

I. Period of John’s Ministry (v.1-2a) – 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,

II. Place of John’s Ministry (v.2b-3a) – 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

III. Portrayal of John’s Ministry (v.3b) – proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

IV. Preparing for Salvation (v.4-6) – 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.”

1. Launching Question(s):

- How, when, and where were you baptized?

2. Observation Question(s):

- Luke provides the names of seven individuals (five Gentile and two Jewish) in order to identify the period of time of the ministry of John the Baptist (and Jesus of Nazareth).
- Why do you think Luke does this?
- What do you remember, from the sermon, regarding the character of some of these men?
- Knowing a little about these men gives you a sense of the times John and Jesus ministered. How might you describe the times (civil, social, religious, etc.)?

3. Interpretation Question(s):

- Biblically speaking, what is significant about the wilderness/desert?
- Why do you suppose John ministered in the wilderness?
- According to the sermon, what type of person would usually be baptized at this time? Why is it significant that Jews were being baptized?
- According to the text, why was John baptizing people?
- How is John's baptism different from Christian baptism?
- Vs. 4-6 quotes a passage in Isaiah that originally related to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity.
- What is the original meaning of "prepare the way. . . makes his paths straight, etc.?" Why did the ancients do this?
- How does Luke relate that passage to John's ministry?

4. Reflection Question(s):

- What do you admire about John the Baptist's preaching?
- Is repentance essential in becoming a true Christian?

5. Application Question(s):

- This week, reflect upon the forgiveness of God by looking at the following Old Testament verses: 2 Chron. 7:14; Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:5-6; Ps. 103:11-14, and Jer. 31:34.