

# John the Baptist

**Luke 3:1** 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,

<sup>2</sup> during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

<sup>3</sup> And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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,

<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

<sup>7</sup> 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?"

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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."

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"

<sup>11</sup> And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

<sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

<sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

<sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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."

<sup>18</sup> So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

<sup>19</sup> 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,

<sup>20</sup> added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

(Luke 3:1-20)

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## The Good News

The “good news” or “**gospel**” (*euaggelizō*). We have four books of the Bible with this word in their title. Curiously, of these four, Matthew uses the word only once, while Mark and John never use it. On the other hand, it is found ten times in Luke (and fifteen more in Acts). We’ve seen it in the **announcement of John’s birth** to Zechariah (**Luke 1:19**) and then again at the **announcement of Jesus’ birth** (**2:10**). These are parallel stories. Its **third** appearance is near the end of our

passage, “So with many other exhortations he [John] preached *good news* to the people” (3:18).

But when you read the passage, this “good news” can be confusing. For example, John calls the crowds a “brood of vipers” (7). Is this good news? He says that “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (9). Is this good news? Three different groups of people ask him *what they must do*. His response each time is to do something very difficult, if not impossible (11-14). Is this good news?

*Theologically speaking*, the Reformers would teach, each in their own way, that the good news is not bad news. They put this in theological terms of law and gospel. Luther would say, “The entire Scripture of God is divided into two parts: commands and promises.”<sup>1</sup> Luther’s close friend Philip Melancthon said it only slightly differently, “All of Scripture is either Law or Gospel” (*Commonplaces* 1521, 94).

Theodore Beza, the protégé of John Calvin, said, “We divide this Word into two principal parts or kinds: the one is called the ‘Law,’ the other the ‘Gospel.’ For all the rest can be

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, “34: Scripture Contains Commands and Promises,” in *The Freedom of a Christian: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*, trans. Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1520, 2016), [https://www.elca500.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Freedom-of-a-Christian\\_final-proof\\_3.17.20201.pdf](https://www.elca500.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Freedom-of-a-Christian_final-proof_3.17.20201.pdf).

gathered under the one or the other of these two headings.”<sup>2</sup> Calvin explained, “The Gospel is the message, the salvation-bringing proclamation concerning Christ that he was sent by God the Father ... to procure eternal life. The Law is contained in precepts, it threatens, it burdens, it promises no goodwill. The Gospel acts without threats, it does not drive one on by precepts, but rather teaches us about the supreme goodwill of God toward us.”<sup>3</sup>

*Biblically speaking*, we never find the words “law” and “gospel” in the same verse, though we do find them several times in verses next to each other. It is more often the case that we find either law or gospel and then a word or two that contrasts with it. For example, “The *law* was given through Moses; *grace* and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17; cf. Gal 3:12; 5:4). Or, “No one is justified before God by the *law*, for ‘The righteous shall live by *faith*’” (Gal 3:11; cf. Rom 3:27; 4:13; Php 3:9). In these cases, the *law* is contrasted with *grace* and *faith*. That is, as far as justification is concerned, they are opposites, *mutually exclusive*. You are

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, trans. James Clark (East Sussex, Eng.: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1992), 40-41.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; The H. H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, 1995), 365.

either justified by your works or by faith in Christ by grace alone, but not both.

An example from the other side would be, “I saw that their *conduct* was not in step with the truth of the *gospel*” (Gal 2:14). In this case, *conduct* and the *gospel* are *not* opposed to each other, but they are also not to be confused with each other. It is like Paul says in Romans, “You are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!” (Rom 6:14-15).

If we mess up the distinction regarding *justification* by faith alone, then we will mix in our good works with being justified. This will create either *terror* in the heart of someone who knows themselves to be the chief of sinners or *pride and arrogance* from someone who seriously thinks that their good works are enough to satisfy the law’s demands, to make up and atone for their sinful works. Nevertheless, people do this all the time when they tell you that the gospel is to *love* one another or to be *nice* or whatever.

On the other hand, when we do not understand that *the gospel produces in us fruit in keeping with repentance*, because the word of God is a seed that is living and active, then

we will either believe we must **coerce people** to be good (because we know God still wants our obedience but have no idea how that happens) or we will simply **no longer care** about obedience and tell people that if they are Christians, they can behave however and God doesn't care. The first leads to **legalism**. The second leads to **antinomianism** (lawlessness).

So what is the good news exactly? Here's a working definition. **It is the announcement of Jesus Christ**, *in whatever relation to him one happens to be thinking* at the moment. You can be thinking about it in terms of his **saving people** apart from works. Or you can be thinking about him in terms of **what he does in and through our lives after we are justified**. You can be thinking about him in terms of God's plan to announce his **coming** into the world. Or you can think about him in terms of his **Second Coming**, or whatever.

## Luke 3:1-20—Context and Structure

Our passage will be **Luke 3:1-20**. It takes us out of the Infancy Narrative of the first two chapters and begins a long section that deals with **Jesus' Galilean ministry**. Technically speaking, **3:1-4:14ish** is preparatory material to his official

ministry which begins around 4:15. There are three or four parts to it. First, we have John the Baptist making his public appearance as the voice in the wilderness. You may or may not separate this out from Jesus' baptism (3:1-20 and 21-22 or 3:1-22). Then we have a long genealogy (23-38). Finally, we have Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (4:1-14).

In trying to figure out what to tell you about today, note that ch. 3 begins with 7 names (1-2a) and ends with 77 (or 70 + 7) names (23-38), thereby making a possible single unit of thought. After the first 7 names, the *word of God comes to John* in the wilderness (2). Just before the 77 names, the Spirit of God descends, and *a voice from heaven comes upon Jesus* in the wilderness (22). Right after the word comes to John, he goes into the region of the Jordan proclaiming a *baptism of repentance* (3). Just before the word comes to Jesus, *John's baptism ends with him baptizing Jesus*. This gives us a lengthy *center*, which is vv. 4-18:

- A. Seven rulers of the current age (3:1-2a)
- B. The word of God came to John in the wilderness (2)
- C. He went into the region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance (3)
- D. John's Message of good news (4-18)**
- C'. All the people are done being baptized, Jesus also baptized (21)
- B'. The Spirit descended and a voice came from heaven to Jesus (22)
- A'. Seventy-Seven names through the ruler Judah to the current age (3:23-38)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is my chiasm. Smith has an ABCBA centering on vv. 18-20. <https://www.alittleperspective.com/luke-3-the-forerunner-of-salvation/>



We can look at this center section in a couple of different ways. First, it can be read as a **single unit** (below left) with parallel sections **centering** on three groups of people all asking John the same question: **What shall we do?** It is interesting that if we look at it this way, the passage (**vv. 1-20**) both **begins and ends with Herod**. But if we look at it this way, then we must figure out how we can make vs. 18, with its summary verse that John is preaching the good news, jive with those troubling statements we talked about a moment ago. Nevertheless, this is a tempting way to look at the passage, because it then parallels the second half of the chapter, which begins and ends with the **son of God**. **Jesus and Herod are thus set up as contrasts.**<sup>5</sup>

A (3:1-3). Herod

B. (3:4-6). A voice crying

C. (3:7-9). Thrown into the fire

**D. (3:10-11). The Crowds: "What shall we do?"**

**D'. (3:12-13). Tax Collectors: "What shall we do?"**

**D". (3:14). Soldiers: "What shall we do?"**

C'. (3:15-17). Unquenchable fire

B'. (3:18). He preached good news

A'. (3:20). Herod<sup>6</sup>

A. (3:21-22). You are my beloved Son

**B. (23-38c) Jesus, the son of (x 76) ... the son of God**

A'. (38d) Jesus: the son of God

<sup>5</sup> The genius of Luke and the Spirit who inspired him is seen by understanding that our passage has multiple levels of coordination. You have the level of Luke-Acts, where this section begins the long section that matches the missionary journeys of Acts (see also the structures by Atwood in previous sermons). At the level of Luke, this section matches Jesus' successors (24:13-49). At the level of the Galilean ministry narrative, it pairs with Jesus discussing John's ministry (7:24-35). At the level of Luke 3-4 it matches the threshing floor and preaching. At the level of ch. 3 it finally works with itself. **See the Appendix** at the end of the sermon for the structures.

<sup>6</sup> "11: The Proclamation of John the Baptist. **Luke 3:1-20**," Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Gospel of Luke, *bible.literarystructure.info*, [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42\\_Luke\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42_Luke_pericope_e.html).



We can also look at it as **two separate units that parallel one another**. I've labelled them as law (**vv. 4-14**) and gospel (**vv. 15-18**). In this way, we can see a contrast between the two halves of the unit, that I think can help us better understand the difficult statements that John makes.

John's message of good news: <sup>7</sup>	
LAW:	GOSPEL:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. It is written: Three lines with intro and summary (3:4-6)</li> <li>B. The wrath to come (7)</li> <li>C. Bear fruits of repentance (8a)</li> <li><b>D. We have Abraham as our father (8b)</b></li> <li><b>D'. God can raise up child for Abraham from stones (8c)</b></li> <li>C'. Every tree with no good fruit is cut down (9a)</li> <li>B'. Thrown into the fire (9b)</li> <li>A'. What shall we do: Three peoples with three answers (10-14)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The people in expectation, is John the Messiah? (3:15)</li> <li>B. John's answer: I with water (16a) (Greek word order)</li> <li>C. baptize you (16b)</li> <li><b>D. He who is mightier than I is coming (16b)</b></li> <li><b>D'. His sandals I am not worthy to untie (16c)</b></li> <li>C'. He will baptize you with the Spirit and fire (16d)</li> <li>B'. Clears threshing floor/burns chaff with unquench fire (17)</li> <li>A'. John preached good news to the people (18)</li> </ul>

When we put **the two ways of looking at it together**, we end up with **three central thoughts**. The divided unit centers first upon a contrast with saying that **Abraham** is your father vs. God raising up children of **Abraham** from stones. The second focuses on **the one coming after John** whose sandals he is not worthy to untie. The first is thus God's great work of salvation (even though it is in a section I'm calling "law") and the second is the person through which this salvation comes, Jesus. The, the wholistic unit has one central

<sup>7</sup> These are mine, inspired from RS (Nov 3, 2016), at <https://www.chiasmuschange.com/2016/11/13/luke-34-18/>.

thought, which is a question. **What shall we do?** This question, asked three different times by three different groups of people, is what you must ask yourself today. Interestingly, again, if we pair this with the second half of the chapter, we again end up at Jesus, who is the Son of God. This is a remarkable piece of literature which differs significantly from the other three Gospel accounts of John's baptism, and I think that by understanding how it was written, it can help you make sense of what Luke's purpose is in telling you about it.

## Luke 3:1-3. John the Baptist Unveiled

Last week, we had a brief introduction to our unit as we looked at the *seven names* of **vv. 1-2**. **Tiberius** Caesar, **Pontius Pilate**, **Herod Antipas**, **Philip** his brother, **Lysanias** of Abilene, and the priests **Annas and Caiaphas**. These names take us long after the Infancy Narrative, to a time when Jesus, as Luke will tell us later, is somewhere around **30 years of age (23)**. Depending on when Jesus was born (anywhere from 7-probably 2 BC; I favor the 3 BC date, but I recently read a book making a good argument for 7 BC),<sup>8</sup> we are sometime in the years 25-30 BC.

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<sup>8</sup> **Corey Piper**, *500 Year Journey From Babylon to Bethlehem: How the Magi Knew When Christ Would Be Born* (2023, forthcoming).

Of these seven names, **Herod will return** later in our chapter. **Vv. 19-20** tells us that, “**Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprovved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.**” Both **Matthew and Mark** tell us about this story with Herodias, Philip’s wife (**Matt 14:3; Mark 6:17**). It is an event that has not yet happened—the infamous tale of Herod being told off by John that it was unlawful for him to have her. Herod had essentially **stolen his brother’s wife** and was now illegally married (according to Mosaic law for multiple reasons, but not Roman law) to her. This ticked the couple off, but they couldn’t do anything about it, because John was so popular. But finally, an occasion arose where he was able to kill John without suffering political fallout.

**Luke will not bother to tell us** about this story, he only even mentions the occasion. Why might this be? Probably because Luke has searched all kinds of material in writing his Gospel and found that this story was so well-known and written about that he didn’t need to retell it again. Even **Josephus** recalls the event (*Antiquities* 18.5.2). Luke’s purpose here is more narrow. John had reprovved Herod “**for all the evil things**” he had done (**Luke 3:19**). This, as we will see, is

going to be precisely what we learn about John and his preaching ministry.

Let us return to **vs. 2**. “The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.” Given that Luke begins up north in Galilee, the “wilderness” might refer to some place east of the Sea, **in the region of Bashan**. We will see in a moment why he mentions the wilderness. But the geography is **narrowed down** further.

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (3). The Jordan River cuts Israel in half from east to west. It’s **source is Mt. Hermon**, with its snows and subterranean water ways that burst out into gushing springs below. It runs over 200 miles, first into **the Sea of Galilee** in the north which is about 25 miles south of the slopes until it finally stops in the lowest spot on earth: **the Dead Sea** which is over 100 miles from the slopes. Of course, this gives a lot of geography for John to be associated with and John was obviously ministering for a while.

**Matthew** focuses in on his being down in *the wilderness of Judea*, so south of Bashan and Galilee. This fits the area where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found (Qumran, off the northwestern side of the Dead Sea), scrolls which many have said

bear much [similarity to the theology of John](#). Some even argue that John was an Essene.<sup>9</sup> John is the only one who mentions where the baptism of Jesus took place. He says it was “[in Bethany across the Jordan](#)” ([John 1:28](#)). Because John’s baptism is associated with Judea by Matthew, many think this Bethany was somewhere south in Judea. But this is not necessarily true. John could have been baptizing from the Dead Sea all the way up to the Sea of Galilee. To me, the location for Jesus’ baptism is most likely just north(east) of the Sea of Galilee, in the region of *Batania* (note *Bethany*), that is, Bashan.<sup>10</sup>

## Luke 3:4-6. John The Forerunner Fulfilling Prophecy

But Luke isn’t interested in any of that. Instead, he tells us his purpose. It is so that we might know that [John is fulfilling prophecy](#). “[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. 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](#)

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<sup>9</sup> For example, [Alan Taylor Farnes](#), “[John the Baptist and the Qumran Connection](#),” *Studia Antiqua* 9.1 (April 2011): 39-45.

<sup>10</sup> See [Rainer Riesner](#), “Bethany Beyond the Jordan (John 1:28) Topography, Theology and History in the Fourth Gospel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 38 (1987): 29-63.

*level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God’” (Luke 3:4-6). Luke is essentially quoting Isaiah 40:3-5 (LXX).*

Luke 3:4-6	Isa 40:3-5	Isa 40:3-5
<p>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.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> 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,</p> <p><sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.</p>	<p><sup>3</sup> A voice cries: "In the wilderness            prepare the way of the LORD;            make straight in the desert a highway for our God.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,            and every mountain and hill be made low;            the uneven ground shall become level,            and the rough places a plain.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,            for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."</p>	<p><sup>3</sup> The voice of one crying in the wilderness,            Prepare ye the way of the Lord,            make straight the paths of our God.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low:            and all the crooked ways shall become straight,            and the rough places plains.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And the glory of the Lord shall appear,            and all flesh shall see the salvation of God:            for the Lord has spoken <i>it</i>.</p>

This passage in Isaiah begins the second of three sections of that book, and more particularly, it precludes the so-called “**Servant Songs**.” It does so by predicting this coming voice in the wilderness who will prepare the way for the Lord (i.e.



the Servant). Not some activity of the Lord, but *the Lord* himself. Not an *event*, but a *person*. This is being fulfilled right now in the person of John the Baptist, which means, the Servant is coming.

The preparatory figure that the Gospels all tell us is fulfilled by John the Baptist will make straight **crooked highways**. In the Hebrew, this highway will be in the desert so that people might get where they are going more efficiently. The LXX and Luke simply say “paths,” wherever they are. He will fill up **valleys** so that they will no longer be low. He will bring low all the **mountains** so that they will no longer be high. **Rough places**, will become level. Certainly, you can hear that John’s job is to make getting to the Messiah an easier task.

But is that even possible? He is saying that the way before John comes is crooked, filled with dark valley’s that must be crossed and high mountains that must be climbed. The road is full of rocks and holes, rough places that twist your ankles and sprain your knees. What is this road? The road and path, crooked, low, treacherous, and rocky is **our sin** revealed so brightly by the law of God. **John’s job is therefore to expose it, and in doing so, makes the road straight. Cyril of Alexandria** puts it this way.



What is the meaning of “Prepare the way of the Lord”? It means, Make ready for the reception of whatever Christ may wish to do. Withdraw your hearts from the shadow of the law, discard vague figures and no longer think perversely. Make the paths of our God straight. For every path that leads to good is straight and smooth and easy, but the one that is crooked leads down to wickedness those that walk in it.

(Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*, Homily 6)

Contrary to popular opinion, walking in the way of sin is the hard road. Think of all the secrets, the lies, the duplicity that you must cover just to hide it from others? Origen said this. “Should not the way be prepared for the Lord within? Should not straight and level paths be built in our hearts? This is the way by which the Word of God has entered. That Word dwells in the spaces of the human heart” (Origen, *Homilies on the Gospel of Luke* 21.5). Chrysostom said, “He is signifying the exaltation of the lowly, the humiliation of the self-willed, the hardness of the law changed into easiness of faith. For it is no longer toils and labors, says he, but grace and forgiveness of sins, affording the way to salvation” (Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 10.3).

Obviously, John is not talking literally. He did not come to tear Mt. Hermon down to sea level and fill the great rift

valley of the Dead Sea up with the degree of the mountain. Such a conflagration would shake the earth and kill all men. This is a *spiritual* activity as it says next, “All flesh shall see the *salvation of God*.” It isn’t that salvation is new. It has always been this way. Abraham believed God by faith, not by works. But now, *all flesh shall see it*. So part of John’s job is to open the way to the Gentiles. Chrysostom again, “No longer Jews and proselytes only, but also all earth and sea and the whole race of people may be saved. By ‘the crooked things’ he signified our whole corrupt life, publicans, harlots, robbers and magicians, as many as having been perverted before, afterward walk in the right way.”<sup>11</sup> John is exposing the sin of all men.

## Luke 3:4, 7. John The *Baptist*

The chief means by which this comes is *through preaching and baptism*. John came “*proclaiming*,” that is preaching (**Luke 3:3b**). We’ll see more of the content of this preaching in a moment. But we’ve already seen that it is summarized as “good news” in **vs. 18**.

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<sup>11</sup> All Fathers quotes from **Arthur A. Just**, *Luke*, vol. 3, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 3. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

He also came *baptizing*. Baptism is a Greek term (*baptizō*) that literally means *to dip or immerse*. No one disagrees with that. Peter says that the world of Noah's day was baptized into the Flood (**1Pet 3:21**), that is, they were drown. Paul implies that the Egyptians were baptized into the sea (**1Co 10:2**), that is, they drown. Baptism is a sign, by definition, *of judgment*. It is an ordeal. Going in over your head symbolizes this. And that has been the way of it in virtually every culture of antiquity. You find it in ancient Egypt, Greece, Babylon, Persia, India, even across the ocean with the Aztecs.<sup>12</sup> As such, the joke is always that John was *the Baptist*, not *the Presbyterian*.

And yet, *Noah was also baptized*, and he didn't even get wet. The same goes for *Israel in the Sea*. At best, they were sprinkled. In fact, baptisms in the OT can be *full washing immersions*, such as the priest at his ordination, or they can be *sprinklings*, such as those cleansing ceremonies with blood and water on vessels or houses or bodies for ritual purity. Hebrews is clear that there were "*various baptisms*" (**Heb 9:10**) in the OT, both of purpose and of mode. We'll talk about this more when we come to **Luke 12:50** and *Jesus'*

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<sup>12</sup> See **Douglas Van Dorn**, *Waters of Creation: A Biblical-Theological Study of Baptism* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2009).

**second baptism.** But for now, I want to say to those who want some kind of an answer as to what John is doing, I suspect he is immersing the people in water, according to the parallel Jewish practice of the **Mikveh**, just like they did at Qumran with which he was quite familiar. The German Protestant Reformer Konrad Pellikan put it this way, “**Here there was plenty of water provided so that he might baptize**” (**Pellikan**, *Commentary on Luke 3:3-6*).<sup>13</sup>

The focus here really should be on why Noah didn't get wet or why the Israelites didn't get wet and yet were baptized. It is because their baptism *was figurative*. It had to be, otherwise, they would have died with everyone else. Their spiritual baptism brought them figuratively out of the waters of death. Like David, “**Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck**” (**Ps 69:1**). **Baptism is symbolic** of resurrection, coming out of the waters of death alive. This is the idea behind **John's baptism of repentance** we well. When one repents, they turn from their sin in the other direction. As we've already said, that direction is salvation. So that's what John is doing. And yet, this can get confusing once we continue reading.

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<sup>13</sup> In **Beth Kreitzer** et al., eds., *Luke: New Testament*, vol. III, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 77.

## Luke 3:7-10. John's Message: Law and Gospel

We turn now to **John's message**. **Vs. 3** raised the issue of the proclamation and baptism. **Vv. 4-6** were a parenthesis explaining that John's ministry was a fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah had predicted this very moment hundreds of years before it happened. **Vs. 7** returns both to the proclamation and the baptism. "**He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him...**" What he *said* is his message, his proclamation. What he *did* was baptize them.

Who is he baptizing? **The crowds**. Notice that they reappear in **vs. 10**. This is helpful, because it creates bookends that hold together the middle message. And since this message is both confusing and raises questions in people's minds, this is a helpful thing. Before we get to it specifically, notice a couple more repetitions. First, we have "**wrath to come**" at the end of **vs. 7**. The end of **verse 9** has "**thrown into the fire**." Those are similar ideas. Next, **vs. 8** begins "**bear fruits...**" Just before the end of **vs. 9's** "thrown into the fire" is said, "**no ... good fruit**." Finally, the middle and end of **vs. 8** mentions **Abraham** twice. All this repetition creates a structure. That structure puts the message of the law and obedience flatly in the context of the center's gospel.

- A. John warns the crowds (3:7a)
- B. Flee the wrath to come (7b)
- C. Be fruitful trees (8a)
- D. Don't say Abraham is our father (8b)**
- D'. Stones can be raised up as children of Abraham (8c)**
- C'. Fruitless trees or bearing bad fruit (9a)
- B': Thrown into the fire (9b)
- A': The crowds ask their question (10)

So now we are ready to see what John says as large crowds are gathering to be baptized. It begins harshly. “**You brood of vipers!**” (7b). Jesus will say this to the Pharisees (**Matt 23:33**), but here is it directed at everyone coming to John. Clearly, this is **not a term of endearment**. He is calling them all poisonous serpents.

Besides what comes to your mind with the reptile, this image that would evoke both **Satan** (and the **fallen Watchers**) and perhaps the region he is baptizing in, if it is **Bashan** (Bashan means “serpent”). To identify your audience with the most dangerous and (for many) disgusting of animals and then on a spiritual level of the worst of the fallen angels is not exactly the kind of preaching that sells on TV or in Big Eva these days. I wonder if it is what they expected to hear as they heard of John's popularity and came out to him in the wilderness?



But *it is worse*. For the word “*brood*” is a word meaning “*offspring*.” John is not just identifying them in their *behavior* with vipers, but in their very *essence*. They are, in effect, children of the devil. That’s how *everyone* coming to him is identified. They are born this way. This is the den in which they are birthed and live out their lives slithering around in the dark. No one today escapes this initial judgment either. For no one is born saved, but rather children of the evil one, as we will see again when we talk about Abraham.

You must *internalize this* if you are to understand what comes next. John continues, “*Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*” (7c). It is a *rhetorical* question, one that the prophets of described many times in their attacks against merely external religion. For example, Isaiah begins his book this way, “*Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats ... Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's*



cause” (Isa 1:10-11, 16-17). After calling God’s people Sodom and Gomorrah, the worst of all the OT cities, he then goes after their false external ideas of religion. Interestingly, he talks about baptism. “Wash yourselves,” but then gives its proper meaning. Thus, what John is saying is something like this. They “live in self-satisfaction and sin and now they desire, without true conversion and by a merely external participation in the baptism, to protect themselves against the impending judgment.”<sup>14</sup> That’s classic American Bible-belt Christianity. Religiosity without a change of heart.

Anyone who comes to church merely to come to church has not only missed the whole point of church, but they have also missed the whole point of what God says that they are by nature and how that nature can be changed. A mere external religion is not capable of transforming your nature. So, John calls them, and you, what you are by nature. A poisonous deadly serpent who is headed directly for God’s wrath.

People come to church wanting to feel as if that wrath has been averted, but often by not wanting to think about God’s wrath at all—pretending it doesn’t exist, must less that it is on them. Thus, we have entire gatherings filled

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<sup>14</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), 138.

with preachers who tell people what they want to hear and people who won't listen to anyone who says otherwise. This is a deadly combination that is incapable of changing anyone's condition because they are not being challenged with where they are headed and how it can be changed.

If you have not yet considered your sin, then you are a viper. I don't care how nice of a person you are any more than John did. Vipers don't *always* attack. But when they do, they are always poisonous. Until you recognize that by nature Satan is your father, you cannot possibly understand why you are headed for coming wrath. But when you do, you realize it is because you have sinned against God and his law. You will not understand that your religious pretenses in coming to church or trying to be a good person are in reality crooked, deep, treacherous, high, rocky paths that will see you fail on your quest to get to God long before you ever arrive. This message of your sin and condition at the beginning of John's words, makes those paths straight. Recognize the path you are on and don't think that merely going to church or being baptized is going to change anything.

Instead, listen to John. "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8a). John's baptism is a baptism of repentance, not status-quo or social club. Repentance means to turn

from what you are doing and to go a different direction. And, as Luther said, it is not a one-time thing. It happens **throughout your life**, every time you recognize you have strayed back onto the crooked path and become a crooked person. You get back on the straight and level road.

But notice, this **begins in the heart** and then works its way out in the actions. **Fruits come after repentance**. “**Bear fruits in keeping with repentance**” necessitates that repentance comes first. Repentance is the planting of a new tree. Bearing fruit is the result of that new tree growing up.

But **how can one repent?** This question is going to take us to the center of the first half of looking at our text as a dual structure. The first half is that **you must not deceive yourself**. You must not convince yourself that when you come into the world that you are born good or in God’s favor. John told the crowds, “**Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’**” (**Luke 3:8b**). The equivalent would be to say, “**My mom and dad are Christians**” or “**My father is a pastor**” or “**I’m in a Christian family**” or “**I go to church**” or “**I’m in a youth group**” or “**I go to a Christian school.**” The Jews were notorious for **trusting in corporate election** for salvation. God did choose them to as his national people.

But they confused corporate election with personal salvation. Many people today growing up in church make the same fatal error.

The second half is to recognize that God's power is infinite and that he can create children out of nothing. In a way, this is John's equivalent of Jesus' "new birth" discussion to Nicodemus. You must be born again. But how can you enter your mother's womb twice? This isn't physical, but spiritual, and it is a miracle of God that comes when the gospel creates new life and brings you faith, which is also a gift of God. John puts it this way. "I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (8c). This is a remarkable statement. It is the center of the passage, and it is the Gospel. God's power is such that one does not need to be born a Jew or born into a Christian family. He is able to make children out of stones.<sup>15</sup> How much more, out of human flesh?

This point is your life. On either side of this word, there is law, things you must do, judgment that's coming if you don't. But if you understand this point, then you will trust

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<sup>15</sup> It may also have been a word-play. "There may have been a pun in John's original words, since the Aramaic words for 'sons' (*bebnayyam*) and 'stones' (*abnayyam*) are similar. Mark Strauss, "Luke," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 355.

in God's power, not your own; in the new birth, not your physical birth of Christian upbringing. You will turn to Christ and not to religion or spirituality of your own making. You will come to see God's sovereign power in election rather than your own pitiful will making you be born again. And then ... you will be able to understand for the first time that God produces fruit in the life that he has just created through the Gospel.

John returns to the trees and judgment. "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" (9). This is highly figurative language, using trees and chopping and fire to talk about the judgment of hell that is coming for those who have not repented. Notice the order. You bear fruit in keeping with repentance, meaning, you repent and then you bear fruit. If you do not bear fruit, it means you haven't repented, because repentance comes from God turning a stone or a serpent into a child of God.

If you say, "But I don't produce any good fruit," then I will ask you, dear Christian, "None? Ever? Really? You've never seen any fruit ever in your life?" It doesn't say "all fruit at once." It doesn't say your tree must be full of fruit. It does say you will have fruit. But if you still say, "Nope, I've never

seen any fruit.” I hope you would then ask, “What should I do?” I will tell you that if this really true, then you must never be to look *to fruit*, but to *look to Christ*. Otherwise, you have fallen right back into that trap of self-righteous that thinks it is by nature a child of God in no need of repenting and turning from sin.

## Luke 3:10-14. What Shall We Do?

We’ll return to this in a bit. For now, let’s continue with the crowds. **Vv. 10-14** give us **three groups** that each ask the **same question**. It may be worth noting that these three groups may correspond to the three sections of the Isaiah quote (Every valley and mountain, the crooked places, the rough places). As such, Luke is highlighting three kinds of people that get messed up on their road to Jesus.

First is **the crowds**. “And the crowds asked him, ‘*What then shall we do?*’” (10). John answers them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise” (11). This is straight out of **the OT law**. Luke and John are not just making up some new principle that God didn’t care about before. For example, Isaiah again says, “*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry*”



and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to *cover him*, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isa 58:7). This is basic generosity and good will rooted in personal self-sacrifice based in God’s blessing. Jesus will say something similar in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:40). If you never have any desire to do this, then you need to come to grips with your sinful condition and where you are headed.

Note a couple of things. It does not say, “Whoever has two tunics must be forced by the government to share with him who has none.” This is not social justice or communism. Nor does it say, “If you only have one tunic and the other guy has none, give him yours.” Though you could do that if you want, the teaching is that God has blessed you with two while he is testing you with the person who has none. What will you do? Display fruit in keeping with repentance or selfishness in keeping with a host of sins? Notice also, this is about what you do when someone in your life has need. It isn’t saying anything about the person you see on TV who is guilting you into sharing with someone 8,000 miles away. Nor is it talking about motives at this point. That isn’t to say that helping someone 8,000 miles away is bad, only that this has in mind a person you literally see as you drive down the



road. To help the far but not the near is not good. It isn't to say that motives don't matter, but some people can be so consumed by their own motives, introspecting all the time, that they never bother to actually do good. This is simple basic kindness and empathy for others rooted in love for one's fellow man. But that love, in turn, is rooted in love for God.

Next come **the tax collectors**. “**Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, ‘Teacher, *what shall we do?*’**” (12). Same question, more specific group. Tax collectors will come up again in this Gospel, and we will see that these are people despised by others. The temptation of a tax collector was to take more than was asked by the government, and keep that extra for yourself. Basically, it was a fast-track to get rich quick by **stealing** from others.

John's reply? “**He said to them, ‘Collect no more than you are authorized to do’**” (13). He hits them right where it hurts. Personally. **He doesn't tell them** not to lust after women or not to take the Lord's name in vain, though both of those he could have said. This is not *their* immediate temptation. He goes after the person where *he* is most vulnerable, so that he can see that repentance means a change of living

in the hardest places for them. In this case, **the eighth commandment**. Stop collecting more than is due so that you can keep it. It isn't yours. It is theirs. If taxation is theft, as I often hear on the internet, and if socialism is taxation on steroids, then what is personally lying to someone about what they owe only so you can keep it? It makes you the little Napoleon. It is the worst kind of theft imaginable.

Finally, **the soldiers** come to John. Again they ask, “*What shall we do?*” (14a). John's answer? “**Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages**” (14b). Again, this is **from the OT**. For example, “**They take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD**” (Ezek 22:12). The problem with having the power of a soldier is that it can be abused through **unlawful violence and intimidation**. So, John again goes after them where it hurts. Do not use your position of power to threaten or extort or lie or make money. One could make an argument that **the love of money** is the root of all three of these rebukes. And why not? It is a root of all kinds of evil. Jesus will say more about this later in the Gospel.

As we look at our passage through the angle of the single structure, **these three questions are at the center**. As well they might be of **vv. 1-20**. What shall we do? What shall we do? If we are serpents headed for hell, *what shall we do!*

John's answer can again be confusing, especially to those who cannot separate the law and the gospel in the sense of justification. For **if he is talking about going to hell and then answers by effectively just being a better person**, then isn't he saying we are saved by our works?

No, he isn't. We've seen hints of this in God raising up children of Abraham from the stones. We will see much more of it now as we move to the second half of the *dual* structure.

## Luke 3:15-18. Look to Messiah

**Vv. 15-18** are beautiful. They are **symmetrical**, beginning with the Messiah and ending with the good news. They feed our sense of **mystery and discovery** by answering the question I've just raised as a puzzle. They are **revolutionary**. For they show us **the only true way that a person can repent and be saved**. The law is never enough. And John knows it.

It all begins with **the response of the people**. “**As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ...**” (15). It seems that whatever the expectations of Messiah were, John was meeting at least some of them. He spoke boldly. He lived purely. He preached obedience and called the people back to the law. Curiously, rather than become incensed at his difficult message, this made them all begin question if he was actually the coming Messiah. Many people are attracted to preaching that tells them what to *do* as an end to itself.

**But John isn't the Messiah** and his words don't save, they merely straighten the path so that you can get to salvation. Here is his reply, “**I with water baptize you. 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.**” The Greek word order at the beginning helps you see the parallels better. **Water parallels with fire** at the end. It also parallels with the **Holy Spirit**, who is the fire of God throughout the OT. It is the Holy Spirit who hovers over the water in Genesis 1:2. It is the Holy Spirit who surrounds the Angel in the fiery bush and in the cloud of fire in Exodus.

Here we have John talking about **two kinds of baptisms**. His was a baptism with water. With it, he baptized the people externally. With it, he will also baptize Jesus in **vv. 21-22**. Physical baptism only points to an inward reality. As Peter will later say, “**Not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**” (**1Pet 3:21**).

Peter is obviously writing this side of the cross and resurrection. John is speaking before it. Yet, he knows enough to say that **his baptism must be different from the true Messiah's**. The best John can do is be a precursor, a type, a foreshadowing, an illustration, a preamble, an introduction, a mystery of the greater reality to come. Why? Because **he is not worthy to untie the Messiah's sandals**. This was a duty not even fit for a Hebrew slave, certainly not for a Pharisee or leader of Israel. Only Gentile slaves would stoop so low. John is putting himself in that lowly category.

Why? Because he is “**mightier than I**.” We learned this as readers of Luke's Gospel already in the first two chapters. This coming one is God himself. How much more will we learn as we go along?

But John gets specific. This person, Jesus, is capable of **giving people an internal baptism, washing their soul**. He

alone can give the Holy Spirit. He alone can purify a heart with fire. This then is the Gospel. John has been pointing out what people must *do*. He has told them that only if there is an internal change of repentance that they can do it. For they have to be newly planted trees. But now he is telling them that this inward work doesn't come from them, but from the Messiah. He alone is capable of washing them in inward places. This is the destination to which those roads and paths point. John's job has been to make the way easier by helping people see their sin and their need for a Savior. He does this now in the climactic way of telling them that he is as inferior to the Coming One as the lowest slave is to his master.

Not merely because the Messiah can internally change a person, but also because he alone can and will *judge them*. His final words are, “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” (19). This language fits with the development of the doctrine of hell that we find in later books of the OT and on into the Second Temple literature. *Malachi* says, “See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble” (*Mal 4:1*). This is the same chapter where *Elijah* (John the Baptist) is predicted to return (See *Luke*



7:27). Isaiah is even more relevant. “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, *their fire shall not be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh” (Isa 66:24).

Whatever these metaphors ultimately point to, it should be without question that **it isn't good**. Wheat and chaff being separated. Chaff being thrown into a fire that is unquenchable. And this being the destination of anyone who does not turn to Christ. Christ here is the **Judge** and he is doing the separation and the throwing. This is a great power that only God himself has, and John is pointing you to him in his mercy. But if you will not turn to him out of love, then turn to him out of fear. If you do, you will come to know that love.

I recently saw **Alice Cooper** talk about his conversion many years ago. He said that he initially came to Christ because he was terrified of hell and knew he was headed there. This was Alice Cooper after all, heavy metal crazy man. But then he later heard of Christ's love and this taught him that God someone who is much than just powerful and terrifying. And this is the good news.

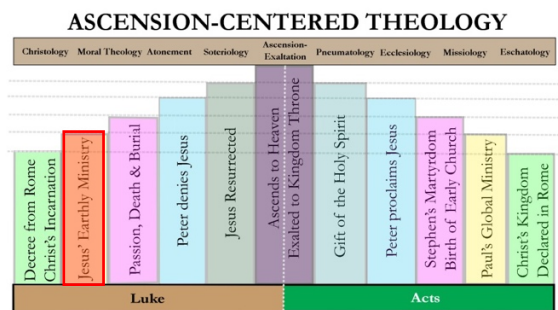


Our last verse again takes us back to the start. “So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people” (18). That’s what John the Baptist came to do, open our eyes to our condition, point out our need for repentance and obedience, but show people that no man, not even him, is capable of giving someone a new heart. *That’s* making the path straight. Get out of the way so God can come in and get all the glory. Now you have seen the straight way. Its destination of Jesus Christ. The question is, will you look to him for your justification, repentance, and good works today, tomorrow, and until he calls you home?

## Appendix: Multiple Level Chiasms of Luke 3

### 1. Luke-Acts (Two Perspectives)

- A. Birth of Jesus in Context of Roman Rule (Luke 1-2)
- B. Jesus in Galilee (Luke 3:1-9:50)**
- C. Jesus in Samaria and Judea (Luke 9:51-19:40)
- D. Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-24:49)
  - E. Ascension (Luke 24:50-51)
  - E'. Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)
  - D'. Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-8:1a)
  - C'. Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:b-11:18)
  - B'. The Gentile world (Acts 11:19-28:10)
  - A'. Rome (Acts 28:11-53)<sup>16</sup>



### 2. Luke<sup>17</sup>

- A | 1:1-2:52. PRE-MINISTERIAL. THE DESCENSION.
  - B | 3:1-20. THE FORERUNNER.**
  - C | 3:21-38. THE BAPTISM: WITH WATER.
  - D | 4:1-14-. THE TEMPTATION: IN THE WILDERNESS.
  - E
 

F   4: -14-5. 11. THE KINGDOM	PROCLAIMED.
G   5:12-9:21. THE KING	
G   9:22-18:43. THE KING	REJECTED.
F   19:1-22:38. THE KINGDOM	
  - D | 22:39-46. THE AGONY: IN THE GARDEN.
  - C | 22:47-24:12. THE BAPTISM: OF SUFFERING (DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION).
  - B | 24:13-49. THE SUCCESSORS.
  - A | 24:50-53. POST-MINISTERIAL. THE ASCENSION.
- THE FOURFOLD MINISTRY OF THE LORD.

### 3. Luke 3-7 (no chiasm in 3:1-9:50 that I've found)

#### A. Ministry of John, 3:1-17

- B. Jesus preaching and teaching in Nazareth, 4:16-30
  1. Quotes Is 61
  2. Refers to Elijah's aid to a widow and her son
  3. Refers to Elisha's aid to Naaman
- C. Calling of disciples, 5:1-11
  - D. Cleansing of leper/healing of paralytic (Pharisees present and in opposition), 5:12-26
  - E. Meal at Levi's house, 5:27-39
  - D'. Healing of withered arm on sabbath (Pharisees present and in opposition), 6:6-11
  - C'. Calling of 12, 6:12-16
- B'. Jesus preaches on the plain, 6:17-7:23
  1. Followed by healing of a centurion - parallels Naaman
  2. Followed by raising a widow's son - parallels the Sidonian widow
  3. Followed by inquiry from John, which includes quotation from Is 61
- A'. Jesus discusses John's ministry, 7:24-35<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This is my modification of **Kenneth R. Wolfe**, "The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship" *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 30 (Spring, 1980): 60-71, combining it with the one we've seen in Blomberg.

<sup>17</sup> **Ethelbert W. Bullinger**, *The Companion Bible: Being the Authorized Version of 1611 with the Structures and Notes, Critical, Explanatory and Suggestive and with 198 Appendixes*, vol. 1 (Bellevue, WA: Faithlife, 2018), 1427.

<sup>18</sup> **Peter Leithart**, "Chiasm in Luke 3:1-7:35," *Theopolis Institute* (Dec 30, 2003), [https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart\\_post/chiasm-in-luke/](https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart_post/chiasm-in-luke/). See also, **Olegs Andrejevs**, "The Double

#### 4. Luke 3-4

a The powerful Spirit-filled ministry of John is described (Luke 3:1-14).

b One is coming Who will send the Holy Spirit and will produce wheat for the harvest and cleanse His threshing floor (Luke 3:15-18).

c John is rejected by Herod for teaching what he does not like (Luke 3:19-20).

d The Holy Spirit comes on Jesus, and God declares that He is His beloved Son, and His anointed Prophet 'in Whom He is well pleased' (Luke 3:21-22).

e Jesus is the son of David (the anointed King), the son of Abraham (the One through Whom the promises are to be fulfilled), the son of Adam (the seed of the woman who is about to break the serpent's head), the son of God (the second Man, the last Adam, fully human in the same way as Adam, partaking as he had done in the image and likeness of God before the Fall), the One Who will fulfil God's purpose in creation (Luke 3:23-38).

f Jesus faces his temptations as to his Messiahship and defeats the Tempter who describes Him as the Son of God (Jesus 'breaks his head' with the word of God) (Luke 4:1-12).

e Jesus, having as the Son of God defeated Satan, goes out in the power of the Spirit and is glorified of all (Luke 4:13-15).

d Jesus reveals Himself from the Word of God as the Spirit anointed prophet of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:16-21).

c Jesus is rejected by the people for teaching what they do not like (Luke 4:22-30).

b Jesus reveals Himself as the Coming One by His power over evil spirits, (cleansing His threshing floor). They declare 'you are the Holy One of God' but are rebuked. The people are amazed at His activity and the word spreads (Luke 4:31-37).

a The powerful Spirit-filled ministry of Jesus is described (Luke 4:38-44).

The section ends with 'And He was preaching in the synagogues of Judaea' (Luke 4:44).<sup>19</sup>

#### 5. Luke 3:1-38

A. Seven rulers of the current age (3:1-2a)

B. The word of God came to John in the wilderness (2)

C. He went into the region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance (3)

**D. John's Message of good news (4-18)**

C'. All the people are done being baptized, Jesus also baptized (21)

B'. The Spirit descended and a voice came from heaven to Jesus (22)

A'. Seventy-Seven names through the ruler Judah to the current age (3:23-38)<sup>20</sup>

#### E. Luke 3:1-20

A (3:1-3). Herod

B. (3:4-6). A voice crying

C. (3:7-9). Thrown into the fire

D. (3:10-11). The Crowds: "What shall we do?"

D'. (3:12-13). Tax Collectors: "What shall we do?"

D''. (3:14). Soldiers: "What shall we do?"

C'. (3:15-17). Unquenchable fire

B'. (3:18). He preached good news

A'. (3:20). Herod<sup>21</sup>

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Tradition in Luke (Q) 3-7 as a Macro-Chiasm and its significance for the Synoptic Problem," *New Testament Studies* 67.3 (July 2021): 388-406.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Pett, *Pett's Commentary on the Bible*. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/pet/luke-3.html>

<sup>20</sup> This is my chiasm. Smith has an ABCBA centering on vv. 18-20. <https://www.alittleperspective.com/luke-3-the-forerunner-of-salvation/>

<sup>21</sup> "11: The Proclamation of John the Baptist. Luke 3:1-20," *Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Gospel of Luke*, bible.literarystructure.info, [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42\\_Luke\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42_Luke_pericope_e.html).

## Luke 3:4-14 and 15-18

John's message of good news: <sup>22</sup>	
LAW:	GOSPEL:
A. It is written: Three lines with intro and summary (3:4-6)	A. The people in expectation, is John the Messiah? (3:15)
B. The wrath to come (7)	B. John's answer: I with water (16a) (Greek word order)
C. Bear fruits of repentance (8a)	C. baptize you (16b)
<b>D. We have Abraham as our father (8b)</b>	<b>D. He who is mightier than I is coming (16b)</b>
<b>D'. God can raise up child for Abraham from stones (8c)</b>	<b>D'. His sandals I am not worthy to untie (16c)</b>
C'. Every tree with no good fruit is cut down (9a)	C'. He will baptize you with the Spirit and fire (16d)
B'. Thrown into the fire (9b)	B'. Clears threshing floor/burns chaff with unquench fire (17)
A'. What shall we do: Three peoples with three answers (10-14)	A'. John preached good news to the people (18)

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<sup>22</sup> These are mine, inspired from RS (Nov 3, 2016), at <https://www.chiasmuschange.com/2016/11/13/luke-34-18/>.

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