

# **“JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS THE BAPTIST”- PART ONE**

## **LUKE 3:1-22**

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

### **Introduction**

In our last sermon-study we learned of Jesus growing spiritually, intellectually, morally and physically as he accomplished his Divine Messianic Mission from birth until his death and resurrection-ascension.

Our sermon is entitled “John the Baptist and Jesus the Baptist” (Doesn’t sound like a “safe” Presbyterian sermon now does it?!).

In our passage today from Luke 3:1-22, we learn of the beginning of John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ public ministry. In the last passage, Luke tells of Jesus’ life at twelve years old. We fast-forward eighteen years, and Jesus is now thirty and begins his public ministry.

***We will focus today on John the Baptist’s Baptism and Mission and Message of Repentance (part one), getting a better understanding by God’s grace of John’s baptism and his call to repentance. We will then focus next week (D.V.) on Jesus’ baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire and the significance of this for believers today!***

You may remember that the last Luke said of John the Baptist was in Luke 1:80:

***“And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”***

### **I. John’s Mission and Message of Repentance**

A. ***John’s Ministry Rooted in Secular and Religious History*** (Luke 3:1-2; cf. Luke 1:1-4). “The Word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness...” (3:2b).

We remember Luke 1:1-4:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:1-4:** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> ***it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.***

- **Seven Historical Figures (3:1-2):**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:1-2:** In the fifteenth year of the reign of (1) Tiberius Caesar, (2) Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and (3) Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother (4) Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and (5) Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, <sup>2</sup> during the high priesthood of (6) Annas and (7) Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

- **Date of John the Baptist's Public Appearance: Circa A.D. 28-29** according to these historical figures in secular and religious history (Augustus Caesar died on Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> A.D. 14 so the *fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar* was A.D. 28- August A.D. 29, Leon Morris, pg. 103).

- **An Evil "Who's Who" of this Period:**

- Tiberius Caesar (characterized by cruelty and severity with the people) - His reign is remembered as a time of moral degeneration and political chaos in the Roman Empire.
- Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (Pagans ruled over Israel and the land). ***In other words, Israel is still essentially in exile under foreign pagan rule even though they live back in the land.***
- Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great), Philip (brother of Herod who ruled over a fourth part of a region thus "tetrarch").
- During the high priesthood of Annas (He had been deposed by Gratus a Roman governor) and Caiaphas (Annas' son-in-law who held the office until A.D. 36).
- Annas was the real high priest in power, but ruled and controlled the high priesthood through his son-in-law. ***This shows the moral corruption even in the High Priesthood of Israel!***

***In a time of political and religious darkness “the Word of God came...” (Hughes, pg. 108).***

B. ***John’s Message:*** Proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

***i. What was the significance of baptism for this time period?***

- Baptism was a practice in a number of ancient religions and was a sign of cleansing. This practice was not borrowed by YHWH and the Israelites, it points I think to God’s truth that can be perverted and used even by those who do not know God.
- **John’s Baptism was unique in Israel and in the world!** His baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism during this time in Ancient Israel was practiced primarily for proselytes, or Gentiles who were not born in the covenant who would come to believe in the God of Israel.

***John calls all to this baptism of repentance, both Jews and Gentiles!***

- **John’s Baptism and Christian Baptism:** Remember to make a ***redemptive-historical distinction*** between John’s baptism and Christian baptism.

***John’s baptism cannot be Christian baptism by virtue of the fact that Christ’s Divine Messianic Mission had yet to be accomplished.***

- a. **John’s Baptism:** Water baptism that symbolizes preparedness for Messiah and the Last Day Coming of the Lord (or Day of the LORD) spoken of in the Old Testament. John’s baptism ***follows true repentance and is a sign of it.***

**John’s baptism is essentially preparatory:** “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel”/ “Prepare the way of YHWH” (Isaiah 40:1-5).

***John’s baptism does not cause a person’s sins to be forgiven,*** but shows that you know

that you're in need of forgiveness and your only hope is in God's mercy and grace.

**Geldenhuys wrote concerning what it meant that John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins:** "This means that John called the people to repentance and then baptized those who confessed their sins and gave indications that they desired to lead a different and better life, in the assurance that God grants pardon to those who sincerely repent. So the baptism is an outward sign and seal that God has forgiven their sins; God alone can give it, and only to the truly repentant." –Gospel of Luke, NICNT, pg. 136.

**The Old Testament Prophets spoke of the significance of John's Baptism:**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Zechariah 13:1** "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ezekiel 36:25** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

Although these prophecies have a more complete fulfillment in Christ, his cleansing and purifying blood, and his baptism in the Holy Spirit, ***John's Baptism is a partial fulfillment of these Old Covenant prophecies.***

- b. **Christian Baptism:** Contrasted to John's Baptism, Christian Baptism is similar and dissimilar to John's, in that it is a water baptism that symbolizes purification and cleansing from sin, regeneration and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (more on this later in the next sermon, D. V.).

Christian baptism is a baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and part of the

Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), or a baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 19:5). Christian baptism is only possible upon the completion of Christ's work in his life, death, resurrection and ascension at God's right hand.

- **Acts 19:1-6**- the Apostle Paul (and Luke who wrote the book) makes an important distinction between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 19:1-6:** And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup> ***And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."*** <sup>3</sup> ***And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."*** <sup>4</sup> ***And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."*** <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

- It is important to note from Acts 19 that these disciples of John had not fully experienced the benefits of Christ's saving work (Remember that this is an overlapping, unique time in redemptive-history and this must be recognized).

These disciples of John in Acts 19 had not received the Holy Spirit since Jesus' resurrection and ascension, they had only been prepared for the coming of Messiah by receiving John's baptism. The Apostle Paul rightly points them to Christ as the object of their faith and the hope of their salvation, and they receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian baptism ("Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus").

- **Charismatic and Pentecostal Theology:** Misinterpreting this distinction between the two baptisms has made some in the history of the Church create doctrines of "first and second blessings" of the Holy Spirit that are related to our charismatic and Pentecostal friends still today.

Those who incorrectly do not make right distinctions through a proper redemptive-historical interpretation think that there are two phases of God's grace: one is through faith and you become a Christian, and the second phase, or "second blessing" is when you receive the Holy Spirit in power. This wrong interpretation is based falsely on the description Luke gives in Acts 19 and not making distinctions between John and Jesus' baptisms in a correct manner.

**ii. What is so radically biblical about preaching 'repentance'? (Luke 3:3).**

- a. **Definition:** Repentance or "to repent" is to turn away from one's sins to salvation found only in God's mercy.
- Hebrew: *shub*- pronounced "shuv";  
Greek: *metanoia*.
- b. John the Baptist stands in a prophetic stream of Old Testament repentance preaching. The prophets of the Old Covenant preached repentance and called the people "to turn" back to God from their sins.

***We should not forget that John the Baptist was the greatest and the last of the Old Testament prophets as we learn from Jesus:***

**Matthew 11:7-15:** As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup> What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup> **What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.** <sup>10</sup> This is he of whom it is written, "**Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.**" <sup>11</sup> **Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.** <sup>12</sup> **From the days of John the**

**Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.** <sup>13</sup> **For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John,** <sup>14</sup> **and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.** <sup>15</sup> **He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**

The prophets (John the Baptist being the last of the Old Covenant prophets) called the people to “repent” (or “shuv”)!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ezekiel 18:21-23:** ***“But if a wicked person turns away (“shuvs”/ “repents”) from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.*** <sup>22</sup> None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. <sup>23</sup> Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that ***he should turn from his way and live?***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hosea 6:1-4:** ***“Come, let us return (“shuv”) to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.*** <sup>2</sup> After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. <sup>3</sup> Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.” <sup>4</sup> What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Joel 2:12-13:** “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return (“shuv”/ “repent”) to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and ***rend your hearts and not your garments.***” ***Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.***

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 7:8-11:** For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it- though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. <sup>9</sup> As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were

grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.<sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.<sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

### **Biblical-Theology of Repentance:**

- 1) A God-given change of heart.
- 2) Our response to God's grace in a turn from our sins to God.
- 3) Visible manifestation of the fruits of our repentance.
- 4) Life and communion with God.
- 5) Worldly sorrow and godly sorrow: What is the difference between attrition and contrition?

- i. **Attrition:** Sorry because you got caught ("worldly sorrow").
- ii. **Contrition:** Sorry because you offended God and your neighbor ("godly sorrow").

### **John Calvin's Definition of Repentance:**

"Repentance...is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit." –*Institutes*, III.iii.5.

### **Westminster Shorter Catechism on**

**Repentance:** *Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.*

**Martin Luther:** When Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Church in Wittenberg, his first thesis was: *Our Lord and*

*Master Jesus Christ, in saying 'Repent ye' etc., intended that the whole of the life of believers should be repentance.*

**Application**

- c. Preaching Repentance is Offensive- It assumes and implies we are sinful before God! Repentance is offensive to any generation.
- d. No self-salvation- All people tend to want to work or cooperate for their salvation and do not like to hear about repentance.
- e. We are hopeless without God's mercy and grace and so we must realize that repentance itself is a work of God!

***Repentance itself is the work of God upon the heart; God grants repentance. We are not saved because of our repentance; our repentance shows that we are truly saved and have been regenerated by God!***

***Through John's preaching the Holy Spirit was regenerating some of the people's hearts that would then respond in repentance, faith and baptism.***

C. ***John's Self-Consciousness as Prophet of God:*** John the Baptist is the realization of Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 40 of His Gospel (Luke 3:4-6).

- John's Baptism of Preparation is the way of "flattening out the road" for the King who is to come.
- John's Baptism of Preparation for the forgiveness of sins is the hope of full restoration from Israel's exile. Geldenhuys writes on the expectation of Israel during this time period:

***"With few exceptions the Jews of that time expected an earthly, political Messiah who should release them from their pagan oppressors. They had not realization of their own sinfulness and of their need of a Messiah who, above all, was to bring spiritual deliverance."*** –Luke, NICNT, pg. 137.

- **Forgiveness of sins:** This was promised in such texts as Isaiah 40:1-5; Psalm 51 and 103 (These Psalms are fully realized in the fullness of the times when Messiah comes as the Mediator between God and man to forgive the sins and make propitiation for sins).

D. ***John's Methodology of Preaching:*** What was John's preparatory message? What repentance looks like in God's eyes (Luke 3:7-15).

i. ***John preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit to make the people aware of their sins before God*** (Luke 3:7-8).

- **"You brood of vipers" (3:7):** A person must be "lost" before they are saved". One must realize that they are lost before God and without hope apart from his grace and mercy. The imagery here that John uses of vipers is snakes that are running out from a brushfire.
- **"Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (3:7):** A person must not merely come to God in order to escape his wrath. The wrath of God or Judgment Day is indeed coming, but the only thing that will save a person is ***not merely fear in the judgment, but the true fear of God that comes through repentance and humility before him!***
- **"Bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (3:8a):** A person must show the fruits of repentance before God and man in how they live as disciples.
  - a. A person must not presume before God that they are saved because they are in the covenant if their lives reveal disobedience.
  - b. "Every tree therefore that does not bear fruit..." (3:9b).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 7:16-21: *You will recognize them by their fruits.*** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> ***Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*** <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who

says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

**Josephus on John:** The Jewish historian Josephus wrote of John and his baptism: “He was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism.

In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior.” Josephus, Quoted in Hughes, pg. 108-109).

- **“We have Abraham as our father” (3:8b):** A person must not depend upon their ethnicity before God saying that they have Abraham as their father.
  - a. God is able to raise up children from stones- - or even worse in the mind of an Israelite: a Gentile!
  - b. **“Covenant privileges imply covenant responsibilities”** to believe and live as Father Abraham believed and lived (cf. Gen. 17; 22; Romans 4:3, 11-12; Heb. 11:8-19).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 2:25-29:** For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. <sup>28</sup> ***For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.*** <sup>29</sup> ***But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 4:3** For what does the Scripture say? ***"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 4:11-12:** He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, <sup>12</sup> ***and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 11:8** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 11:17-19:** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." <sup>19</sup> ***He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.***

- c. Israel had the privilege of being under the preaching and reading of the Word of God, and this was to make them more responsible before God to depend upon his mercy, and to walk humbly as sinners saved by grace.

**John 8:37-45:** ***I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.*** <sup>38</sup> I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." <sup>39</sup> They answered him, **"Abraham is our father."** ***Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did,*** <sup>40</sup> ***but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.*** <sup>41</sup> You are doing what your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father- even God." <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here.

I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.<sup>43</sup>  
Why do you not understand what I say? It is  
because you cannot bear to hear my word.<sup>44</sup> **You  
are of your father the devil, and your will is to  
do your father's desires. He was a murderer  
from the beginning, and has nothing to do with  
the truth, because there is no truth in him.  
When he lies, he speaks out of his own  
character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**<sup>45</sup>  
But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 3:26-29:** ...For in Christ Jesus you  
are all sons of God, through faith.<sup>27</sup> For as many of  
you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.  
<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither  
slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for  
you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you are  
Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs  
according to promise.

- **“Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees” (3:9):** The Last Day Judgment is upon the people in the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah.
  - a. A separation between the authentic and the artificial; a eschatological separation of the sheep and the goats now depending upon whether one believes or not.
  - b. Jesus himself tells the people that when they see the finger of God’s power revealed in miracles and casting out devils and conquering the Evil One, then they must know that the Kingdom of God is “upon them”:

**Luke 11:17-23:** But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.<sup>18</sup> And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.<sup>19</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.<sup>20</sup> **But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**<sup>21</sup>  
When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;<sup>22</sup> but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and

divides his spoil.<sup>23</sup> Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

c. **“Already-Not Yet” or Inaugurated Eschatology in the Gospels.**

- The Judgment is “already” present in the Person and Work of Christ; the Judgment is “not yet” in that there is a period (“the Day of Salvation”- 2 Cor. 6:1) when the judgment is delayed so that many will repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:3-9):

**2 Peter 3:4-9:** They [scoffers in the last days] will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."<sup>5</sup> For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,<sup>6</sup> and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.<sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.<sup>9</sup> ***The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.***

- John preaches the imminent Judgment Day: “Even now the axe is laid at the root of the trees”.
- God’s judgment and salvation is made known in the coming of Jesus Christ.
  - i. **Repent and believe-** Salvation and redemption NOW and when he returns!
  - ii. **Do not repent and believe-** Judgment now and when he returns!

- **“What then shall we do? (3:10b)”**: Because of God’s work by his Holy Spirit, some in the crowds realize their need of repentance and to show forth that repentance in their lives, particularly sinful tax collectors and Jewish (or Roman!) soldiers (3:12).
  - a. The least likely in the eyes of the people (tax collectors and either Jewish or Roman soldiers!) seem to be those who realize their need and repent.
  - b. Luke shows us the irony in that the “multitudes” made up of Jews and Gentiles believe, while the Jewish leaders do not believe:

**Luke 7:29-30:** ( When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, <sup>30</sup> **but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.**)

- c. **Closing Application:** Importance of **doctrine and life**.
  - i. John preaches repentance, but also a life of belief to show the true repentance.
  - ii. Reformed folks love their doctrine (as they should!), but we must also understand that the doctrine or teachings of the Bible are to teach us how to walk obediently before God! The Israelites were well versed in theology and the Old Covenant Scriptures, but many did not have the true repentance and life of faithful service to God and neighbor that this doctrine was revealed in order to instruct the people in obedience.
  - iii. John summarizes what true repentance before God looks like from Micah 6:8:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Micah 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:11** And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

***"Love kindness (or mercy)"***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:13** And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

***"Do justice"***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:14** 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."

***"Do justice"***

- iv. All of these external, outward manifestations of repentance are concerning money and material possessions.
- v. John shows repentance in an attitude toward possessions that displays itself in sharing, being fair, and contentment.
- vi. **Application:** Do you live a life of repenting daily of your sins: your lack of love, doubting God's goodness, your meanness, your selfishness, your stinginess, your unforgiving and critical spirit?

Summary statement of John's preaching:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:18** So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

***We must seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.***

***God is not willing for any of his people to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:3-9).***

### **Closing Prayer**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, seeing that since antiquity it has always pleased you to extend your grace toward your people, as perverse and rebellious as they can be; and that you have never ceased to exhort them to repentance, but have always taken them by your hand through your prophets; grant us also your grace today, that your same Word may resound in our ears; and, if at first we should not profit from your holy teaching as we ought; nonetheless, do not reject us; but by your Spirit subdue and so reign over our minds and affections, that being truly humbled and brought low, we give you the glory that your majesty is due; so that being clothed by your love and fatherly favor, we may submit ourselves totally to you, while at the same time embracing that goodness which you have provided and offered us in our Lord Jesus; that we might never doubt again that you alone are our Father, until that day that we rejoice in your heavenly promise, which has been acquired for us by the blood of your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## **PART ONE**

### **LUKE 3:1-22**

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:1-22** 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. [Luke again roots his Gospel deeply in secular as well as religious history as a verifiable, reliable historical document; cf. Luke 1:1-4]

<sup>3</sup> And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [John's message was preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; John was the forerunner of Messiah who was preparing the way for the One who was greater and would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.]

<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.'" [John the Baptist self-consciously knows he is a prophet, and particularly 'THE' prophet sent by God to prepare the people for the coming of Messiah and the salvation of God as prophesied many years before by Isaiah.]

<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. [John is telling all of Israel that it does not matter your ethnicity, or your position in society before God; what truly matters is your heart before God. In verse 8 he tells them if they are truly repentance, let them bear the fruits of that repentance before the world. God is able to raise up from these stones children of 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." [A pregnant eschatological moment where the "Last Day Judgment" is intruding on the

present: the axe is laid to the root of the trees; this reminds us that although the axe has been laid at the root, the tree is not fully cut down and thrown into the fire until Christ returns on Judgment Day; this implies that there is still time to repent and be saved, because as the Apostle Paul says: "Today is the day of salvation."]

<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." [John summarizes Micah 6:8: "What is good and what does God require of you O man?" To do justice, love kindness ("mercy") and walk humbly before your God.]

<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 with fire. [John tells the people plainly that he is not the Christ, but he is coming. John describes Christ Jesus the Messiah as 'mightier', 'greater' (cf. John 1:29ff; 3:30- "He must increase, I must decrease", One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with 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." [Again, John's message is pregnant with eschatological expectation: Jesus Christ's winnowing fork is in his hand and when he appears his goal will be to remove the chaff from the barn of Israel and into the 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. <sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup> 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." [Jesus' public ministry begins, and he is publicly recognized by the people and proclaimed God's Son for all to hear and see; we have the Trinitarian witness to Jesus' ministry that gives even more credibility to John the Baptist's preaching and confirms as with a covenantal stamp that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of God.]

## **Scripture Lesson**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 40:1** Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. <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. <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. <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."

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 1:22-34:** So they said to him [John the Baptist], "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." <sup>24</sup> (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup> They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup> John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup> even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup> These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. <sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup> And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 3:1** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" <sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume 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>10</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>11</sup> "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with

unquenchable fire." <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

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