

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**1-8-25**

**Luke 3**

**The Ministry Of John The Baptist – Verses 1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—<sup>2</sup>during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

**3:1** Tiberius, the Roman emperor, ruled from A.D. 14 to 37. Pilate was the Roman governor responsible for the province of Judea; Herod Antipas and Philip were half brothers and sons of the cruel Herod the Great, who had been dead more than 20 years. Antipas, Philip, Pilate, and Lysanias apparently had equal powers in governing their separate territories. All were subject to Rome and responsible for keeping peace in their respective lands.

**3:2** Jewish law provided for only one high priest. He was appointed from Aaron's line and held his position for life. By this time, however, the religious system had been corrupted, and the Roman government was appointing its own religious leaders to maintain greater control over the Jews. Apparently the Roman authorities had deposed the Jewish-appointed Annas and had replaced him with his son-in-law, Caiaphas. Nevertheless, Annas retained his title (see Acts 4: 6) and probably also much of the power it carried. Because the Jews believed the high priest's position to be for life, they would have continued to call Annas their high priest.

**3:2** Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas were the most powerful leaders in Palestine, but they were upstaged by a wilderness prophet from rural Judea. God chose to speak through the loner John the Baptist, who has gone down in history as greater than any of the rulers of his day. How often people judge others by the superficial standards of power, wealth, and beauty, and miss the truly great people through whom God works! Greatness is measured not by what you have but by your faith in God. Like John, give yourself entirely to God so God's power can work through you.

**3:3** To turn to God to receive forgiveness from sins implies turning away from sins. We can't just say we believe and then live any way we choose (see 3: 7-8); neither can we simply live a morally correct life without a personal relationship with God because that cannot bring forgiveness from sin. Determine to rid your life of any sins God points out, and then determine to live in a way that pleases him.

**John's Ministry As A Fulfillment Of Prophecy – Verses 4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. <sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. <sup>6</sup>And all people will see God's salvation.'"**

**3:4-5** In John's day, before a king would take a trip, messengers would tell those he was planning to visit to prepare the roads for him. Similarly, John told his listeners to make their lives ready so the Lord could come to them. This does not mean that you must get rid of all your sin or wrongdoing before you can accept Christ; rather, when you accept him, he takes care of all your sinfulness. To "prepare the way" means clearing aside the baggage of the past and the doubts of the present in order to let the King come into your life. He'll take it from there.

**3:6** This book was written to a non-Jewish audience. Luke quoted from Isaiah to show that salvation is for "all people," not just the Jews (Isaiah 40:3-5; 52:10). John the Baptist called everyone to prepare to meet Jesus. That includes you, no matter what your nationality, social standing, religious affiliation, or political position. God is calling to all people. Don't let feelings of being an outsider cause you to hold back. No one who wants to follow Jesus is an outsider in God's kingdom.

### **John's Message To The Multitudes – Verses 7-9**

**7** John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **9** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

**3:7-8** Some people wanted to be baptized by John so they could escape eternal punishment, but they were not really repenting from sin nor were they willing to change the way they lived. John had harsh words for such people. He knew that God values reformation above ritual. Confession of sins and a changed life are inseparable. Faith without deeds is dead (James 2:14-26). Jesus also spoke harsh words to the respectable religious leaders who lacked the willingness to repent. They wanted to be known as religious authorities and they wanted eternal life, but they didn't want to repent of their sins. Thus, their lives were unproductive. Turning from sin must be tied to action. Following Jesus means more than saying the right words; it means acting on what he says.

**3:8** Many of John's hearers were shocked when he said that being Abraham's descendants was not enough to ensure salvation. The religious leaders relied more on family lines than on faith for their standing with God. For them, religion was inherited. But a personal relationship with God cannot be handed down from parents to children. Everyone has to make a personal decision of whether or not to trust Christ. Don't rely on someone else's faith for your salvation. Have you made that personal decision to trust Christ?

### **John's Message To Specific Individuals – Verses 10-14**

**10** "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. **11** John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." **12** Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" **13** "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. **14** Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

**3:11** John's message demanded at least three specific responses: (1) Share what you have with those who need it; (2) whatever your job is, do it well and with fairness; and (3) be content with your earnings. John had not been commissioned to bring comforting messages to those who lived sinful lives; he was calling the people to right living as he prepared the way for their Messiah. What

changes can you make in sharing what you have, doing your work honestly and well, and being content?

**3:12** Tax collectors were notorious for their dishonesty. Romans gathered funds for their government by farming out the collection privilege. Tax collectors earned their own living by adding a sizable sum— whatever they could get away with— to the total and keeping this money for themselves. Unless the people revolted and risked Roman retaliation, they had to pay whatever was demanded. Obviously the people hated the tax collectors, who were generally corrupt and greedy. Yet, said John, God would accept even these men; God desires to pour out mercy on those who confess their sins and then to give them strength to live changed lives.

**3:12-14** John's message took root in unexpected places— among the poor, the dishonest, and even the hated occupation army. These people were painfully aware of their needs and they were honestly seeking to know what to do to change their lives. Did anyone follow John's advice? Surely some did, and their softened hearts became ready to receive the message of the One who was to come.

### **John Points Forward To A Greater One And A Greater Baptism – Verses 15-18**

**15** The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. **16** John answered them all, "I baptize you with<sup>[w]</sup> water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." **18** And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

**3:15** Israel had not seen a prophet for more than 400 years. It was widely believed that when the Messiah would come, prophecy would reappear (Joel 2: 28-29; Malachi 3: 1; 4: 5). When John burst on to the scene, the people were excited. He was obviously a great prophet, and they were sure that the eagerly awaited age of the Messiah had come. Some, in fact, thought John himself was the Messiah. John spoke like the prophets of old, saying that the people must turn from their sin to God to avoid punishment and to experience his mercy and approval. This is a message for all times and places, but John spoke it with particular urgency— he was preparing the people for the coming Messiah.

**3:16** John's baptism with water symbolized the washing away of sins. His baptism followed his message of repentance and reformation. Jesus' baptism with fire equips one with power to do God's will. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was first given at Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit came upon believers in the form of tongues of fire, empowering them to proclaim Jesus' resurrection in many languages. The baptism with fire also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God's judgment on those who refuse to repent.

**3:17-18** John warned of impending judgment by comparing those who refuse to live for God to chaff, the useless outer husk of the grain. By contrast, John compared those who repent and reform their lives to the nourishing wheat itself. The winnowing fork was a pitchfork used to toss wheat so that the kernels would separate from the husks. Those who refuse to be used by God will be discarded because they have no value in furthering God's work. Those who repent and believe, however, hold great value in God's eyes because they are beginning a new life of productive service for him.

## **The Boldness Of John's Message Is Illustrated – Verses 19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, <sup>20</sup> Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.**

**3:19-20** In these two verses Luke flashes forward to continue his explanation about John the Baptist. Herodias was Herod's niece and also his brother's wife. She would treacherously plot John the Baptist's death (Matthew 14:1-12). The Herods were a murderous and deceitful family. Rebuking a tyrannical Roman official who could imprison and execute him was extremely dangerous, yet that is what John did. Herod seemingly would have the last word, but the story is not finished. At the Last Judgment, Herod, not John, will face God's punishment— for eternity.

## **The Baptism Of Jesus – Verses 21-22**

**<sup>21</sup> When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was 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 Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."**

**3:21** Luke emphasizes Jesus' human nature. Jesus was born to humble parents, a birth unannounced except to shepherds and foreigners. This baptism recorded here was the first public declaration of Jesus' ministry. Instead of going to Jerusalem and identifying with the established religious leaders, Jesus went to a river and identified with those who were repenting of sin. When Jesus, at age 12, had visited the temple, he had understood his mission (2: 49). Eighteen years later, at his baptism, he began carrying it out. And as Jesus prayed, God spoke and confirmed his decision to act. God was breaking into human history through Jesus the Christ.

**3:21-22** Theologians have long been troubled by Jesus' allowing himself to be baptized by John. After all, this baptism was for sinners. Why, then, did Jesus do it? He did it because he is both God and human— he underwent baptism and even death as only a human could; he lived a sinless life and rose from the dead as only God could. This baptism by John in the Jordan River was another step in his identification with us sinful people; and the arrival of the dove signifies God's approval. Now Jesus would officially begin his ministry as God's beloved Son walking the dusty roads of Israel. When you are hurting, depressed, or broken, remember: You have a Savior who understands your humanity. When you sin, remember: He has paid the price for your disobedience.

**3:21-22** This is one of several places in Scripture where all the members of the Trinity are mentioned— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the traditional words of the church, the one God exists in three persons but one substance, coeternal and coequal. No explanation can adequately portray the power and intricacy of this unique relationship. There are no perfect analogies in nature because there is no other relationship like the Trinity.

## **Genealogy of Jesus – Verses 23-38**

**<sup>23</sup> Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, <sup>24</sup> the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, <sup>25</sup> the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, <sup>26</sup> the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda, <sup>27</sup> the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, <sup>28</sup> the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the**

son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,<sup>29</sup> the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,<sup>30</sup> the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,<sup>31</sup> the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,<sup>32</sup> the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon,<sup>[d]</sup> the son of Nahshon,<sup>33</sup> the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,<sup>34</sup> the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,<sup>35</sup> the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,<sup>36</sup> the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,<sup>37</sup> the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan,<sup>38</sup> the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

**3:23** Imagine the Savior of the world working in a small-town carpenter's shop until he was 30 years old! It seems incredible that Jesus would have been content to remain in Nazareth all that time, but he patiently trusted his Father's timing for his life and ministry. Thirty was the prescribed age for priests to begin their ministry (Numbers 4:3). Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving the king of Egypt (Genesis 41: 46), and David was 30 years old when he began to reign over Judah (2 Samuel 5:4). Age 30, then, was a good time to begin an important task in the Jewish culture. Like Jesus, we need to resist the temptation to jump ahead before receiving the Spirit's direction. Are you waiting and wondering what your next step should be? Don't jump ahead— trust God's timing.

**3:23-38** Matthew's genealogy goes back to Abraham and shows that Jesus was related to all Jews (Matthew 1). Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam, showing that Jesus is related to all human beings. This is consistent with Luke's picture of Jesus as the Savior of the whole world.