

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Last time we met this couple Zacharias and Elizabeth who were barren. And we were told that they would have a son and they would call his name John. And this child would go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to draw people back to God, to prepare their hearts to receive their Messiah!

And then we are introduced to a woman named Mary. A very young girl that was also told that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and she will bring forth a son and not just a son, the Son of God.

And from Matthew we see that this child would be called Jesus and He came to save His people from their sins! This evening we will see the birth of this child, of Jesus and some very interesting people who were waiting for the Messiah.

Also, keep in mind that as we are going through this book, Luke the physician is presenting Jesus the man or the humanity of Jesus. Thus, Luke gives us great details of things, dating events for us, and-so-on, being very thorough in what he is telling us, like a physician would be.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

LUKE 2**VERSES 1-3**

First of all, let me make this perfectly clear because today, many believe the stories in the Bible are just that, made up stories. A kind of “*Once upon a time.*” But these are not fanciful stories but they are actual historical events and Luke makes that perfectly clear for us as he dates the time that Jesus was born.

According to historical documents, Quirinius was governor over Syria in 7-9 A. D., which would place the birth of Christ several years too late! Bible critics love that as they shout out, “Another Bible error!”

First of all the word “**first**” in verse 2 is the Greek word PRO, and thus, this verse can read, “*This census took place before Quirinius was governor of Syria.*” And that would make sense since many believe that he was governor over Syria twice, in 3-2 B. C. and thus, if this census or taxation took place before he was governor, that would place it sometime in 4 B. C., which was the timeframe Jesus was born.

Also, Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavius, ruled Rome from 27 B. C. to 14 A. D. and he makes this decree that a census be taken. Of this man one commentator wrote,

He was born with the name Octavian, named after his father. His grandmother was the sister of Julius Caesar, and being a talented young man, Octavian came to the attention of his great uncle. Julius Caesar eventually adopted Octavian as his son, and he was made his official heir in 45 b.c. Within a year Caesar was murdered, and Octavian joined with two others – Mark Antony and Lepidus – in splitting the domination of Rome three ways. For decades, the whole Mediterranean world was filled with wars and violence; now, under the Triumvirate, it became far worse. There were years of bloody, brutal fighting for power and money in Rome and the provinces.

Octavian and Antony soon pushed Lepidus out of the picture. Even though his sister married Antony, for thirteen years Octavian and Antony existed together as rivals, until 31 b.c. For a year, their huge armies assembled and positioned themselves. Antony, with the help of Cleopatra, brought 500 warships, 100,000 foot soldiers, and 12,000 cavalry. Octavian answered with 400 warships, 80,000 infantry and 12,000 horsemen. Octavian had the better strategy and the more mobile ships, and he defeated the combined forces of Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt at the battle of Actium. Now Octavian was the sole ruler of the Roman world, and took the title Caesar Augustus.

- David Guzik

Caesar Augustus was the first Caesar to be called “Augustus” and prior to that it was a title that was given to the gods. But now man had become god or so they thought. In fact, when Caesar Augustus died men actually “comforted themselves, reflecting that Augustus was a god, and that gods do not die.” (John Buchan)

Thus, as you can see, these men thought they were god’s and in power, in control, and what they wanted done was done or else! So he issues a decree to tax the people thinking he was in charge but, as we are going to see, he was not in control but God was using him as His instrument to fulfill His plans!

One more point here just to give you an idea of the world that Augustus lived in and the world that Jesus was going to be born into. We are told, “The lusty peninsula was worn out with twenty years of civil war. Its farms had been neglected, its towns had been sacked or besieged, much of its wealth had been stolen or destroyed. Administration and protection had broken down; robbers made every street unsafe at night; highwaymen roamed the roads, kidnapped travelers, and sold them into slavery. Trade diminished, investment stood still, interest rates soared, property values fell. Morals, which had been loosened by riches and luxury, had not been improved by destitution and chaos, for few conditions are more demoralizing than poverty that comes after wealth. Rome was full of men who had lost their economic footing and then their moral stability: soldiers who had tasted adventure and had learned to kill; citizens who had seen their savings consumed in the taxes and inflation of war and waited vacuously for some returning tide to life them back to affluence; women dizzy with freedom, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries.” (Durant)

So the decree was sent forth and people were to go to their home city to register and pay their taxes. Let's read on and see how this plays out because it will fulfill the prophecy that the Lord spoke several hundred years earlier!

VERSES 4-7

Here we see Joseph and Mary make this 80-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which means the house of bread, to fulfill the command of Caesar Augustus. You see, he wanted them to return to their hometowns to be taxed there, and both Joseph and Mary were from Bethlehem.

Make no mistake about it, this was a difficult journey, and we are not sure how far along Mary was in her pregnancy but Joseph was not going to leave his pregnant wife home, especially with all the talk about her becoming pregnant before marriage and not by Joseph!

Now we read something like this and we may think how unfair this really is! How can God allow something like this to happen to this godly family? And all because some guy in Rome who thinks he is god makes this decree!

Please understand that what transpired was in the plan and purposes of God and I think in our own lives, it is no different. Now you may not agree with that but God is in control and not man.

And if you are still struggling with this, we are told in Micah 5:2, **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”**

Some 700 years before this event took place God said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and how would you get this couple to travel that far in her condition, the later stages of her pregnancy? Have a decree sent by this power-hungry ruler that all must return to their hometowns for taxation purposes. So who is really in control, who is really in power? God is in control and that will never change! It is as Proverbs 21:1 says, **“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever He wishes.”**

Also notice in verse 5 that it says that they were **“betrothed”** and the word **“wife”** was added. What is the point. They were married but they had not consummated the marriage yet, not until after the birth of Jesus and as we will see, Mary and Joseph had children. Not a big deal but I do find it interesting how exact Luke is in describing these things.

So as they were in Bethlehem Mary goes into labor and born to her is a son that they call Jesus! And the way Luke wrote this it seems like Mary was alone in this delivery, there was no one there to help her except Joseph. And as Jesus is born we are told that Mary wrapped Him in **“swaddling cloths”** and this comes from an ancient Greek word that means “to tear.” In other words, she wrapped Jesus in torn strips of cloth!

Now, as we read on we will see God working with another group of people in the fields of Bethlehem.

VERSES 8-14

Now notice who the first group of people who heard of the birth of the Savior were. They were not priests nor were they businessmen, they were not the high-class society type people. They were not the highly educated people. No, they were shepherds or what we might call the outcasts of society. They could not be trusted.

As Morris tells us, “As a class shepherds had a bad reputation . . . More regrettable was their habit of confusing ‘mine’ with ‘thine’ as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts.”

Why would God do that, speak to these shepherds first? Because God comes to those who are in need, who recognize that they are in need, that they realize that they have come up short. The Gospel message is for those who know they need Jesus!

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 1:26-29, “**For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.**”

When we come to the end of ourselves and remove the glory we have bestowed upon ourselves, thinking we are something special, then God gets the glory as we surrender to Him. We are nothing, we are sinners separated from God and thus, He gets the glory because He is the One who has saved us! Thus, “**. . . no flesh should glory in His presence.**”

It would seem that these shepherds who were caring for these sheep in the area of Bethlehem were the ones that cared for the Temple flock. Also, these men may have also protected and cared for the lambs used in the Temple sacrifices.

That is interesting to me because there in Bethlehem was born the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world! No more sacrifices will be needed because the perfect sacrifice was going to be made by Jesus!

Now imagine these shepherds out in the field, it is nighttime and all of a sudden, an angel appears before them and we are told that **“they were greatly afraid.”** No kidding, I hear a noise at night and wonder what is going on!

And we see this angel, maybe Gabriel because he seems to be the angel that brings news, information to God’s people, and this time he brought **“good tidings”** or the Gospel message, which, of course is very Good News to these shepherds! And this Good News was not just to the Jews but to all people! You see, we didn’t need an advisor, but a Savior! We didn’t need a doctor, we needed a Savior! We didn’t need a businessman, a lawyer, a warrior but we did need a Savior because our sins have separated us from God!

Also, the word **“Christ”** means Messiah and the sign to these shepherds is that they will find this Savior of mankind, this Messiah wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Not exactly what you would expect!

And as this angel finishes bringing this good news to these shepherds all of sudden we see this multitude of angels break forth with this worship song unto the Lord, they just could not hold back any longer and they sang out, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace towards men of good will.”**

I know, in your Bibles it says that they were praising the Lord and singing **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth good will toward men!”** That is not correct, it is correctly translated, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace towards men of good will”** or **“Glory to God in the highest, and peace among men with whom He is pleased.”**

You see, the peace of God is not for everyone but for those who have come into a relationship with Jesus, who have asked Him to be Lord and Savior of their lives. Who is God pleased with? Those who believe in Him and that belief is just not an acknowledgement of who He is because the demons know He is God and they are not saved. It is giving your life to Him, all of it. In John 6:29 we are told, **“... ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”**

You see, God’s peace is not given to those who have good will nor to all, but to those who are recipients of God’s good will, His favor. In fact, Isaiah 48:22 says, **“‘There is no peace,’ says the LORD, ‘for the wicked.’”**

This peace that permeates the land is coming when Jesus returns, but we can have peace with God through Jesus Christ and then the peace of God will fill our hearts and our lives. It is as Jesus said in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”** The only true peace is found in Jesus!

These shepherds heard the good news, the Gospel message and look at what they do next.

VERSES 15-20

You have to love these shepherds, they heard the good news and then, they did not sit around and do nothing, the good news put them into action and they went to find this Child in Bethlehem, the Messiah who was born just as the angel told them. What a response, they hear the call and they go. A good lesson for us as God calls us to step out in faith for Him.

And what I like about this is that it shows me God can use anyone to proclaim the Good News, the Gospel message, not just these shepherds but you and me! And think about this for a minute. How can you keep inside of you all that God has shown you and given to you? These shepherds couldn't and I think we must also share with others the Good News of Jesus in a world that doesn't have much good news anymore!

Now Mary took all this to heart, I don't think she fully grasped all that was going to take place. But she also did not negate what she heard and what she was told. We see here that Mary **“... kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”** And in the end, she understood!

VERSES 21-24

Joseph and Mary were fulfilling Jewish Law by having their son circumcised on the eighth day. In Leviticus 12:3 we are told, **“And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”** This was a symbol of the covenant that God gave to Abraham and it is symbolic of the cutting away of the flesh, living after the Spirit, the new life.

We also see the name given to this child. It is Jesus in the Greek or Joshua in the Hebrew, and it means *YAHWEH IS OUR SALVATION* or *YAHWEH HAS BECOME OUR SALVATION*. In other words, He is our salvation or as Acts 4:12 puts it as Peter speaks of Jesus, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** I think that is very clear, at least it should be!

Then, we also see that the days of Mary’s purification were over. According to Leviticus chapter 12, the purification for a woman who has given birth to a male child was 40 days and if she gave birth to a female child it was 66 days.

So her purification was completed and they go to the Temple with an offering of two birds, not a lamb, which tells us this couple was not rich, they were in fact poor. It also shows us the wise men had not come with their gifts at this point, (Matthew 2:11).

Also, as you read that it is telling us that Mary was a sinner and offered this sacrifice because of that. We even saw back in Luke 1:47 that Mary sang out, **“And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”** In other words, she too needed a Savior because she was a sinner and her sins separated her from God!

VERSES 25-32

Here was a man in Israel who was **“waiting for the Consolation of Israel.”** The word **“consolation”** is the Greek word PARAKLESIS, (par-ak’-lay-sis) and it speaks of “the comfort, help.” He was waiting for help to come to Israel and that help was going to come through the Messiah!

What is interesting to me is that this was not some gut feeling, some emotional response but it was the Holy Spirit bringing this to his attention and Simeon was listening and waiting for this to come to pass, for the Messiah to come and that was going to take place before he died.

That tells me he must have been older in age but his faith was in the promise of God to him and he knew that he would see the Messiah, but not the way you may think.

On this day the Holy Spirit led him into the Temple and there in the Temple he saw Mary and Joseph bring their young son in. And Simeon, upon seeing this took the baby Jesus into his arms and praised God.

And notice that this Messiah was not only for the Jews but He was to bring revelation to the Gentiles as well. This Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the Jewish people has also come to take away the sins of the Gentiles!

Now what did Simeon see? Not some leader who would sit upon some throne, but just a child and he did not even know this child except for this encounter and yet, look at the love that he had for Jesus! On the other hand, look at all we know of Jesus and many times how little we love Him!

Folks, like Simeon, we can be at peace when we rest in God's Word and His promises to us. Anxiety, fear, turmoil comes when we negate God's Word and His promises! Do you believe that God loves you and He will never leave you or forsake you? I hope so because that is what the Bible tells us. Now if you believe that then you need to live it no matter what you are going through. Rest in Him and allow His peace that surpasses all understanding guard your heart or emotions and your mind or your thoughts! He truly is our peace as we rest in His Word and His promises to us! Don't forget to calculate God into the situation you are facing, it changes everything!

VERSES 33-35

Can you imagine what was going through the minds of Joseph and Mary as Simeon was saying these things? Think about this child in their arms, and this is the One who will bring salvation to mankind! And because of what He was going to do, many would turn against Him because He did not fit their theology. And for Mary and Joseph, I'm sure they tried to put things together to try and understand what God was doing and they didn't always get it right. But they tried!

And as you read this you can see that Simeon is saying that Jesus is like a magnet where some people are drawn to Him and others are repelled away from Him. There is Peter and then there is Judas. Or the one thief on the cross that turned to Jesus and the other that was repelled by all He stood for! Think of Jesus as being, literally, ***“a target that people will shoot at.”***

And for Mary, as much as there will be joy in raising the Messiah, joy in raising this child, she will be pierced through her heart in agony over what they do to Him as she stood by and watched them nail Him to the cross and then watched her Son die! But for salvation to come the penalty for our sins needed to be paid in full, and that is what Jesus has done for us!

VERSES 36-38

First of all let me say this because I still hear talk today about the 10 lost tribes of Israel. And what they are talking about are those Jews that were taken in captivity by the Assyrians in around 722 B. C., but here is Anna from the tribe of Asher! You see, they are not lost!

Keep in mind that because of the wickedness that was going on in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the priests and many of the people went down to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Thus, they were not take captive by the Assyrians.

As we have seen, Simeon was a man of God, not much is known of him but what we read is amazing. And now we see here an amazing woman of God by the name of Anna. And this woman spoke forth the Words of God, she was a prophetess.

Now here is an important lesson for us to learn. Anna was only married for 7 years when her husband died and she then devoted the rest of her life totally to the Lord, serving Him for 84 years!

What's the point? Think about it. Anna could have become bitter towards the Lord, mad at Him, angry at Him! She could have just turned her back on God but instead, she served the Lord with all of her heart!

That is the point! I don't know what you are going through right now or what has happened to you in the past. But here is the thing that I do know, that God loves you and will never leave you!

"You already said that Pastor Joe!" You bet I did but we probably need to hear that a lot. Don't let difficulty, adversity cause you to become bitter, angry at God where you turn from Him or you just drop out.

In those times draw near to Him as this woman did. She spoke forth the Words of God and she praised God and she prayed and it lifted her spirits and she served the Lord with joy in her heart. What a lesson for us to learn!

Also, keep in mind that Anna did not know much about Jesus but look how she loved Him and told others about Him! I love her dedication and faithfulness for all those years, she didn't give up, and I think that message is also for us. Don't give up no matter what may come your way, serve the Lord all the days of your life and do so with joy!

Look at the witness this woman still is today and may our lives be a witness to others as we serve our Lord by speaking forth His Words, by worshiping Him and in prayer!

VERSES 39-40

We don't know much about the early years of Jesus, so why speculate, as many try to do. Let me give you an example. In the Gospel of Thomas we are told, "When the child Jesus was five years of age and there had been a shower of rain, which was now over, Jesus was playing with other Hebrew boys by a running stream; and the water running over the banks, stood in little lakes; But the water instantly became clear and useful again; he having smote them only by his word, they readily obeyed him. Then he took from the bank of the stream some soft clay, and formed out of it twelve sparrows; and there were other boys playing with him. But a certain Jew seeing the things which he was doing, namely, his forming clay into the figures of sparrows on the sabbath day, went presently away, and told his father Joseph, and said, Behold, thy boy is playing by the river side, and has taken clay, and formed it into twelve sparrows, and profaneth the sabbath. Then Joseph came to the place where he was, and when he saw him, called to him, and said, Why doest thou that which it is not lawful to do on the sabbath day? Then Jesus clapping together the palms of his hands, called to the sparrows, and said to them: Go, fly away; and while ye live remember me. So the sparrows fled away, making a noise. The Jews seeing this, were astonished, and went away, and told their chief persons what a strange miracle they had seen wrought by Jesus." Gospel of Thomas 1:2-10.

First of all there is no Gospel of Thomas that belongs to the Scriptures so why do people believe what is written here and not what is in the Word of God? Because then they are accountable to God and as they take in other things, they are only accountable to themselves, what they want to believe! As Trapp so rightly put it, “Where the Scripture hath no tongue, we must have no ears.” *AMEN* to that!

What we do see here, what Luke tells us, is that Joseph and Mary fulfilled the requirements of the Law and they raised Him in the things of God and Jesus grew spiritually, intellectually and God’s grace was upon Him.

As parents, that is a good lesson for us to follow. To raise our children to be strong in the Lord, to resist those temptations of the world upon them. To fill them with the wisdom of God which comes from His Word. And to give them the grace of God as we pray for them.

It is as Peter said in I Peter 4:10, “**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**” Or as The Living Bible puts it, “**God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God’s many kinds of blessings.**”

Also, we see that Luke omits this family’s journey to Egypt and is going to pick up the story when Jesus is 12 years old. Keep in mind that as they returned from Egypt, Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth. (Matthew 2:13-23).

VERSES 41-45

According to Exodus 23:14-15, attendance to the major feasts was required. And so Joseph, Mary and Jesus go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. And it is a celebration as the town of Jerusalem fills with pilgrims to celebrate this Feast!

Now as they head home they traveled in large groups of family and friends, and somehow, Jesus got lost. You know how kids are, but it is truly bad when you lose the Messiah!

I'm sure Joseph thought Mary was watching Him and Mary thought Joseph was watching Him, but neither were and they had gone out of the city a day's journey. Can you imagine how they felt at this point as they head back to Jerusalem looking for their son? I'm sure they were fearful, anxious, worried over Jesus being lost!

VERSES 46-50

Luke tells us that they spent two days traveling and one day looking for Him, three days total until they found Him in the Temple. Kind of a strange place to look for a kid, but there was Jesus impressing the Jewish scholars by what He was saying, His understanding of things, of God's Word.

And Luke tells us that both Joseph and Mary found Jesus, which means this meeting was taking place in the outer courts of the Temple because women were not allowed in the inner chambers.

I don't know if you have ever lost someone before but your first response when you find them is you hug them, you tell them you love them and then you tell them, "What in the world were you thinking? Your mother and I were scared to death that something happened to you!" That was Joseph and Mary!

What is interesting as His parents said these things, that Jesus doesn't even acknowledge His earthly father, Joseph, but His heavenly Father. It could be at this point that Jesus fully realized who He was and what He was sent to do! At the age of 12, according to Jewish teachers, a boy must be about his father's trade, and that is what Jesus is doing, being about his father's business!

Like Mary and Joseph, we can lose contact with Jesus. Not because we misplaced Him but we can lose contact with Him through unbelief and unconfessed sin. To restore that relationship, to re-establish that relationship, we too must go to the place where our fellowship, our contact was broken and confess our sin and return to Him. A great lesson to follow!

VERSES 51-52

Notice that Jesus did not let this go to His head, "Hey, I'm God, I'm not going to do the dishes!" No, Jesus submitted to his parent's authority and He grew intellectually, physically and spiritually.

Too often we think of Jesus being born as a "Superman" but that is not true. As He grew "He passed through a natural but perfect spiritual and physical development. At every stage He was perfect for that stage." (Geldenhuys)

LUKE 3**VERSES 1-2a**

Again, Luke is dating the starting of John the Baptist's ministry, in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, so around 29 A. D. Pontius Pilate governed Judea from 26-36 A. D. Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee from 4 B. C. to 39 A. D. His brother Philip ruled east of the Jordan from 4 B. C. to 34 A. D. And Lysanias ruled in the northwest part of Damascus.

Now Bible critics said there is no evidence of a Pontius Pilate until they found a stone in the area of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast with his name on it. The original stone is in the British museum but a copy of the stone remains in Caesarea today, I have seen it. Luke's account was accurate, God was right and man was wrong, go figure?

And again, what I want you to see is the accuracy of what Luke is saying. He is telling us when these events happened and he gives to us the leaders during this period of time. Once, again, this is not some fairy tale, Luke is giving to us the facts, just the facts!

Also, Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. I will explain that in a minute because there is only one High Priest, at least that is the way God established it.

First of all Annas had this position as High Priest from 6 to 15 A. D. but was removed by Rome and replaced with his son. In fact, four them had a go at it but all were removed by Rome. Finally, Rome placed Caiaphas, who was the son-in-law of Annas, as High Priest. He was High Priest from 18 to 36 A. D. And yet, the Jews looked to Annas as the real High Priest, the power behind the scene you might say. Thus, there were, in a sense, two High Priests.

VERSES 2-3

As John was in the wilderness the Word of God came to John, the Holy Spirit was speaking to John, guiding John and now John was going to go public with His ministry. You see, that phrase “**came to**” is the Greek word EPI or upon. God anointed him for service.

And John was baptizing people, preparing them to receive their Messiah. The interesting thing is this, Gentiles who became Jews were baptized into the faith, but the Jews were not baptized or immersed like this.

So this is a radical idea and yet it was what was needed for them to return to the Lord, a radical change in their life, a return to Him. You see, baptism speaks of a changed life, and John was turning the hearts of the people back to God!

As Pate wrote, “Baptism by water, whether understood by the Qumran community as applicable to itself or as preached by Jewish missionaries to Gentile converts symbolized spiritual cleansing from sin, the result of forgiveness.”

Now please understand that this baptism did not cleanse them from their sins, only Jesus can do that. What we see here, as I have said, is the people preparing their hearts for the Messiah as they turn back to God. You see, Paul tells us in Romans 6:3-4, “**Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**”

You see, John’s baptism was one of repentance and the person was identifying themselves with their need to get right with God and be cleansed. Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, something that the baptism of John could never do!

VERSES 4-6

John recognized that this was his mission, to get people back on track. And maybe I should not say his mission but it was the mission that the Lord gave to him and he took those steps of faith and obeyed the Lord!

And as Luke sees this work of John as the fulfilment of what Isaiah said, he quotes out of Isaiah. And John is now the forerunner to the Messiah, preparing the people to receive their King, their Messiah!

You see, before a King or prominent person would come to a town, the people would fix things up, fill in the holes in the road, make the paths straight, and John was getting the people's hearts ready to receive the Messiah, as I have said. And I like what Isaiah says, that this coming One will bring salvation to all, not only to the Jews! I am so thankful for that!

VERSES 7-9

As you read this you can clearly see that Jesus did not have a slick advance man to get the people ready. You don't want your advance man to call the people you want to follow you, "**SNAKES**," but that is what John did, he was very honest!

You see, John is calling them to action not just to come and hear him speak. Please understand that the Jews believed that father Abraham stood at the gates of Hell ready to pluck out any Jew, even if he was unbelieving, for the Gentiles were created to fuel the fires of Hell and not the Jews. That was their thinking. John is saying that they are wrong. Being a descendant of Abraham is no ticket to heaven just as being a Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran or even a Calvary Chapelite and-so-on is! It is a matter of the heart that is manifested into action in your life - **FRUIT!**

And as the people heard this they said, *“John, you are hurting our fragile self-esteem. Can you please be more positive! I want to feel good!”* No, that is not what they said. Let’s read on and see what they said because today, what I just spoke of regarding our fragile self-esteem is permeating the church and it is not of God!

VERSES 10-14

Notice what took place here, his message brought about conviction upon the people and they wanted to know what to do next! Again, today people would be upset with a message like that but it was needed back then and I do think it is needed today as people, leaders in the church are moving away from healthy doctrine and are infecting their people with a deadly virus that is leading them away from God. They need to be reproved like John did here!

And notice what the evidence for this repentance is. Caring for people, reaching out to them, not taking advantage of them. It is as we are told in Micah 6:8, **“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”**

Now in saying that please keep in mind that John is not speaking of a salvation by works but a salvation that works. In other words, don’t be self-centered, help others. And that is what the Scriptures say should be manifested in our lives, not for salvation but our identification with the Lord!

For the common people, it was simple, help those in need. It just makes sense but when you are not walking with God your focus is upon yourself and not others and thus, here is the evidence of repentance!

And as some of the other people came to John asking him what they should do, he tells them. For instance, the tax collectors were hated people for they collected taxes for Rome and thus, the Jews hated them with a passion. They would rip people off. So John tells them that the evidence for their change in heart will be that they no longer rip people off. They would treat people fairly, they only collected what was right.

Then came the soldiers, and John tells them to treat people kindly, don't abuse them or use your power to hurt others. Be satisfied in what you have. Don't let your position go to your head! Be fair.

VERSES 15-18

Do you see how John spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit - lives were changed, people wanted to know what to do, they wanted to know if John could be the Messiah, they had a new hunger for the things of God!

And John is a remarkable man. Look at this following he had as many came out to the wilderness to hear John preach and yet, John did not exalt himself. Who did John Exalt? He exalted Jesus, the Messiah who was to come.

And here is the promise of the overflowing of the Spirit of God in our lives for those who receive Him and the fire of judgement for those that don't. He will divide the true from the false, the wheat from the chaff!

And just to show you that John was a humble man, he says regarding the Messiah, “... whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. . . .” Luke 3:16. You see, the rabbis of Jesus’ day taught that a teacher might require anything from his followers *EXCEPT* to have them take off his sandals. Why? Because that was just too humiliating! But John says that he is not even worthy to do this for Jesus!

VERSES 19-20

John did not pull any punches, he told it like it is. Sin is sin and it does not matter who is involved, from the outcast of society to the leader of a nation, if they are involved in sin, John exposed them.

Now what was the problem with Herod, what was his sin all about? Again, apart from God man can do the most outrageous things thinking there is nothing wrong with what they are doing and we see that with Herod!

The relationship between Herod and Herodias was both complicated and sinful, as you can see. He was her uncle, and he seduced her from his half-brother. In marrying Herodias, Herod at once married a woman both his niece and his sister-in-law.

Herod abused his power, and as they came back to Galilee John blasted him for his wickedness. Now Herod, and especially his new wife, Herodias, didn’t like that and thus, John was arrested and placed in prison.

Here is the lesson for us. Don’t let anything stop you from proclaiming the truths of God with boldness. In a nation and world that calls good evil and evil good, steeped in immorality, we need to stand up for righteousness, it is not the time for us to be silent!

I am not saying that we are to be obnoxious, but when you expose the darkness that is out there you need to understand that they will try to extinguish the light, you and me! It is not time to be silent, but to let our light shine in a world in darkness!

VERSES 21-22

Keep in mind that the baptism of Jesus took place, obviously, before the arrest of John the Baptist. Luke just gave to us the work that John the Baptist did, up until his arrest by Herod and now he is sharing with us how John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

Also, we need to understand that Jesus was not baptized because He was a sinner and needed to repent. The Bible is very clear on this, that Jesus was without sin and if He did have sin then He could not be that perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:18-19, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

Also, in Hebrews 4:15 tells us this very thing, **“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

Then why was Jesus baptized? He was baptized to identify Himself with sinful man. He was showing us what we need to do when we come to God and receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Baptism does not save us but it identifies us with God. It shows others that we have repented of our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and that old life was dead as we were placed in the waters of baptism and as we came out of the water it was that new life in Christ that we are now living.

Also, Luke is the only one who speaks of Jesus praying here, showing us the humanity of Jesus. And it was while He was praying that we see the heavens open and the Holy Spirit coming upon Him and then the voice from heaven, God the Father speaking and saying, “**You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.**”

And once again, we see the Trinity spoken of, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. One God manifested in three distinct persons.

Jesus began His earthly ministry with the blessing of the Father and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus, we can have the same things.

VERSE 23a

Keep in mind that the priest could begin their service at the age of 30, according to Numbers 4:2-3. So Jesus was at the age of maturity for His ministry to begin, He has been empowered by the Holy Spirit for the work and the Father is well pleased with Him. Thus, as we will see next time as we get to Luke chapter 4, as the work begins the Devil is right there trying to thwart it!

VERSES 23b-38

As some read this they have a big problem because it differs from the genealogy that Matthew gives us. Thus, there is much confusion about this and speculation but it is really very simple why the genealogies here and in Matthew chapter 1 differ after David. It is because Matthew gives us the genealogy or lineage of Jesus through His step-father Joseph, the legal line by adoption. Luke, on the other hand, gives us the genealogy or lineage of Jesus through His mother Mary, Jesus's blood line to David.

Why is that important to us? Because in Jeremiah 22:28-30 we are told, **“Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol - a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’”**

You see, God placed a blood curse on Coniah or Jeconiah, a descendant of David, and thus, the line of David now had a blood curse on it and no one could sit on the throne of David from this lineage.

But, Mary's lineage goes from David's other son, Nathan and not Solomon, who has the kingly blood but not the curse. So Jesus had the legal right to the throne from His step-father Joseph without the curse and the blood right to the throne through His mother Mary. God has a perfect plan!

And in verse 23 we even see the incarnation spoken of in a way that many don't see but I believe it is there. There are two points I want to make here. First of all, that phrase "**as was supposed**" in regards to Joseph being the father of Jesus can be read literally, "**according to the Law.**"

In other words, Jesus was adopted into the family of Joseph according to the Law, Joseph was a step-dad to Jesus!

Also, this word "**supposed**" is the Greek word NOMIZO and it carries with it the idea of "to deem, think." And it is in the imperfect, or past, tense, with a passive voice. What that means is that this verse can also be translated, "the people used to continually think about Him as Joseph's son." In other words, they knew he was not the son of Joseph biologically and some believed that Mary had sexual relations with another man, but that was not true. This speaks of the Incarnation, the Immaculate Conception of Jesus!

Also, he was, that is Joseph, "**the son of Heli**" by marriage. Now Joseph was not the son of Heli, so what is up with that? In the Greek text the word "**son**" is not there. What Luke is telling us is that Jesus came through one called Eli. Thus, Eli was the grandfather of Jesus or Mary's father!

One last point before we close this evening. Luke takes us all the way back to Adam, while Matthew takes us back to Abraham, why?

Because Luke is showing us the humanity of Jesus and thus, he takes us back to the first man, Adam, while Matthew is showing us that Jesus is the King of the Jews, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, so he takes us to the father of the Jews, Abraham.

I like this thought as we close, “A Bible translator to a distant tribe saved the genealogies for last, because he thought them the least important part of the Gospels. But when he finally finished them last of all, the tribesmen were astounded - they told the translator, ‘You mean to tell us this Jesus was a real person with real ancestors? We had no idea!’”

Jesus is a real person, He is the living God who died for our sins and as we proclaim this truth may others see the loving God we serve and may they come to that saving faith!