

## Luke Chapter 3 - John Karmelich

1. My lesson title is, "Preparing people for the coming of Jesus and preparing Jesus for the world." I admit that I took that title from a John MacArthur sermon and changed it a little. The more I read this chapter, the more I realized how appropriate it was. With that stated, let me describe what is happening in this chapter and then talk about why this is important for our lives:
2. The chapter focuses on two key historical events. The first is John the Baptist and what he did to prepare people for Jesus coming in the world. You may recall that Chapter 2 ended with part of Jesus' life when he was 12 years old. Luke does his best to "time stamp" the starting date of John's ministry by stating all of the people in charge of government and the Jewish leaders at that time. In short, it is now about 18 years after Chapter 2. At that point the text talks about what John said and did to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. Note that Luke writes outside of a time sequence here. My point is Luke uses the first half of Chapter 3 to state the purpose, mission and end of John's ministry to prepare people for Jesus' coming.
  - a) Then the chapter does an abrupt switch, and gives a genealogy of Jesus going backwards from his parents all the way back to Adam. Some have argued that this is the genealogy of Joseph and that it involved actual parents versus adopted parents. I say that because the names given differ from the genealogy given in Matthew's Gospel, while both lists do include King David. I take the classical position that this is the genealogy of Mary even with the fact that Mary's name is not listed, but only Joseph's. Let's just say for now that the answers involve the male dominance over that culture and that Luke's goal is to show us how Jesus is also fully human with a genealogy that can be traced back to Adam. The good news is I'm not going to go name by name through this list, but just show you why Luke bothered to include this list and what it teaches us about Jesus coming in the world.
3. With all that said, let me now focus on the important question: Why should we care about any of this stuff? After all, most of us already accept the literalness of John the Baptist preaching about repentance before Jesus started His ministry. Most of us also accept the literalness that Jesus was a literal descendant of King David, let alone Abraham and even Adam. So given the fact that we as Christians already accept what is written here as historical facts, why should we study Chapter three and what is it God wants us to learn from this chapter? The answer is my lesson title that I should state again: "Preparing people for the coming of Jesus and preparing Jesus for the world".
  - a) Consider how God wants us to use the most valuable thing He gives us, our time. To be a good witness for Him and share Him with others. That doesn't mean we have to go be a foreign missionary. It means Christians are missionaries in whatever role our lives are at any given moment. To make my point another way, a missionary isn't just someone our church may financially support. It is whom all of us Christians are supposed to be. That does not mean we have to go dress like John the Baptist and go out in the wilderness and wait for people to come to us. Just as God had a unique and special role for John to play in presenting Jesus to the world, so God has a unique role for each of us to do in our own missionary work of presenting Jesus to others around us. Neither does it mean we have to say, preach Jesus while at work or at home. It does mean we live a life differently as so others know we are believers and we can give an answer if they ask us about our faith.
  - b) What I'm getting at is this chapter teaches us how we too are to prepare for Jesus coming into the world and how we should react to that message. The good news I'm not asking you to memorize all the facts and names given in this chapter. They are here to show us the literalness of John the Baptist's ministry and the literalness of Jesus being fully human as a direct descendant of the bible patriots, Adam, Abraham and David so that we can be witnesses for Jesus in the world around us. With that said, let's get started on the text.

4. Chapter 3, Verse 1: 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 desert.
- a) Let's be honest here: These first two verses give us a bunch of unpronounceable Roman and Israelite names that we'll probably forget right about now. To state this another way, why should we care about who was in power at the time when John the Baptist came on the scene? Yes I can say that they didn't have "year 30AD" yet, and time was marked by who was in power at the moment. However, that is only the tip of the iceberg of why we have these names here. Let me put it this way: The purpose of learning a little historical background here is not to be an expert in biblical times history, but to understand what was life like when Jesus and John the Baptist came on the scenes. To keep it simple, if you think you're life is difficult, imagine living when circumstances were so corrupt, it would be almost unbearable to live. That's what we have here and what I need to explain. With that said, let me give a little background about these people and you'll see my point.
  - b) Remember that Luke's goal of these two verses is to give us a "when". The first clue of the "when" is what Roman Emperor was in power. His title was Tiberius Caesar. If you read my lesson on Chapter 2, when John and Jesus were born the emperor back then time was called Caesar Augustus. My simple point is another emperor is now in charge.
    - i) You may also recall from the last lesson that the leader the Romans let rule over Israel at that time was named Herod. He's also known in history as "Herod the Great". Herod was a pro-Roman Edomite who the Romans' let rule in exchange with keeping peace with Rome. To put it mildly, the Jewish people didn't like Herod nor did the like the Romans ruling over them.
    - ii) When Herod died, his kingdom was divided into four parts. In Verse 1, you may notice the word "tetrarch". That just means "fourth". In other words the territory that Herod ruled over was divided into four parts after he died, and he had one son rule over each part. It's a little like when Alexander the Great died, and his territory was divided into four parts with each of his four generals getting a part.
    - iii) To make a long story short, one of those sons was so corrupt, the Romans replaced him and that's when Pontius Pilate came on the scene. He too had his own issues of corruption. Let's just say the Israelites didn't fair well under the oppression of the Roman Leadership.
  - c) If all of that wasn't bad enough for the Israelites living back then, I also need to discuss who were the high priests at that time. The text says Annas and Caiaphas. Annas was not a direct descendant of Aaron. He was a high priest appointed by Rome. To state it another way, the priesthood was financially corrupt and I suspect "Rome" got kickbacks with these guys in power. Annas has four sons and a son-in-law named Caiaphas. Think of it as Annas being the real man in power and then he rotated his children and son in law having the title of high priest while "Annas" pulls the strings. If you know your bible you may recall that when Jesus was on trial at the end of his life, he was put before these two men as part of that trial. Both Jewish and Roman historical records describe these two as being corrupt leaders and that's my main point here.
  - d) The reason I give all of this background is not for us to memorize their names. It is for us to understand how difficult life was for the average Jewish person living back then. They had to deal with corrupt leadership. The desire for a Messiah to relieve them from both Rome and its corrupt influence had grown so that they might even accept the message of repentance as John and Jesus were starting to come on the scene. The point for us is if we think our world is corrupt, it is nothing compared to what they had to deal with. If God can send a savior living under those conditions He can and does help us with whatever we have to deal with today.

5. Verse 3: He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of forgiveness of sins.
- a) Meanwhile, it's time to get back to John the Baptist himself. Remember that the first half of this chapter focuses on Jesus' purpose, life and mission. You can think of Verses 1 and 2 as the focus on "when". Verse 3 then focuses on "what". That what is preaching about the forgiveness of sins.
  - b) A little background might be helpful here. In the Jewish culture of that day, the idea of a person being baptized was only for non-Jewish people to convert to Judaism. Someone who's born Jewish would never need to be baptized as in effect they believed they were saved just based on their national heritage. It's like believing my mother and dad were both strong Christians, so I'm automatically saved. To state the obvious, it doesn't work that way, but that's the way many people think.
  - c) I also need to talk briefly about the concept of repentance. It's more than just being sorry for sins one has committed. It is about wanting to change one's lifestyle based on trusting God's in charge of one's life. It's amazing to realize how few Christian churches today do preach on the necessity of repentance in order to be saved in the first place. Realize that repentance is what both Jesus and John preached not only to "non-religious" but also to the religious leaders of that day. To say it another way, God is not impressed with how religious we are. We are saved by humbling ourselves before Him, and realizing in effect we are nothing without Him. Then only by relying upon His power can we ever make a difference for Him not to earn His love, but strictly out of gratitude for what He's already done for us. That idea of humbling ourselves before God is what repentance is all about and it's a necessary part of being saved to begin with.
  - d) The reason I give that speech, as that in effect is what John the Baptist is preaching here.
  - e) With that said, we can now focus on what it is John actually said:
6. Verse 4: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, <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 the people will see God's salvation.' "
- a) What we have here is John quoting Isaiah Chapter 40, Verses 4-5. That leads me to ask 2 simple questions: How did John know Isaiah, and how did Luke know what he said?
    - i) First as to John knowing Isaiah, remember that at John's birth, an angel told his parents that John would be the forerunner to the Messiah. John's father was a priest and most likely had access to the Old Testament scrolls. My point is I'm convinced that John was trained well by his parents and may have even copied for John the scroll of Isaiah so that he could learn the book. I'm equally as convinced that Isaiah which was written about 700-800 years earlier, was literally predicting about John's role as the prophet in these verses.
      - a) In other words, by John proclaiming these verses out loud, he is saying that he is the guy that Isaiah predicted about. A man who would come before the Messiah comes into the world who would point the way to Jesus.
    - ii) My second issue is how did Luke know this as he didn't come on the scene until about 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection? I suspect that Luke interviewed men who were disciples of John. When Luke wrote Acts, he mentioned in Chapter 19, Verse 3 about some men who were baptized by John. My point is it may have been by those men that Luke learned these verses that John was preaching.
  - b) Before I get into what these verses mean, I was trying to picture how crowds came to him. After all, John was preaching in a wilderness area away from the population. My guess is he just started preaching to the open air. I'd bet travelers or shepherders were the first to hear the message. They then reported back to town what they heard and the desire to go see this guy spread from there. I suspect a lot of the desire to see John is because people wanted a Messiah to relieve them of the burdens of the Romans and corrupt priests.

- c) With all of that said, it's time to talk about these verses from Isaiah. First know that Luke quotes from the official Greek translation of the Old Testament that was done around the year 300 BC. This translation is known as the Septuagint, which literally refers to seventy scholars who made that translation. With that said, notice the word "salvation" at the end of Verse 6. That word is not in the original Hebrew text. The Septuagint writers put that word in there to stress the point that whenever this person comes on the scene that Isaiah was talking about, he (John the Baptist) would be there to discuss salvation.
    - i) In other words, the purpose of Verses 4-5 was for people to see God's salvation as it comes through the Messiah. It is another way of preaching one cannot be saved by being "born into it". One had to repent of the idea of thinking our good deeds can outweigh our bad deeds in order to be saved.
  - d) All of that leads us back to Verse 4 and "prepare the way for the Lord". Understand that both Isaiah and John are using an illustration people can relate to in order to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. The illustration is that of a "king coming to town". Before a king would arrive, the road would be fixed so for example, there were no potholes for the king to travel over. It would be like a president or major general coming to our small little town and we repave the roads to make his entrance better. My point is neither Isaiah nor John were not being literal about fixing the roads. They were using an illustration to help people get ready as THE promised Messiah is about to come on to the scene.
    - i) If the idea of making the roads smooth was an illustration, what does that mean? The idea again, is about repenting. One thing that's hard for us to grasp is the idea of a king, being a king. That means that king is in charge of our lives and has the right and power to kill us if it is his desire. In other words, obey or else. John is trying to preach the concept of repentance because THE king is coming! That is why John wanted everyone (Jews and non-Jews) be baptized as a symbolic way of saying we repent of our sins and we want to humble ourselves before God.
  - e) Finally, let me talk for a moment about Verse 6 that says, "6And all the people will see God's salvation". Remember that the last few verses from Isaiah were figurative, so it's not a problem to assume that Verse 6 is not being extremely literal about every person on the planet seeing Jesus at His first coming. One can correctly interpret that to mean that those who live in Israel at that time will see Jesus. Remember that He appeared in the city of Jerusalem at the major holidays when all of Israel traveled there for that holiday.
    - i) A second interpretation is future, about the Second Coming when Jesus will rule the world from Israel. One can also apply it to the fact that the bible teaches that when we die, everyone will bow the knee to Jesus either by will or by force, as is implied in Romans 14:11.
    - ii) With all of that said, it's time to move on.
7. Verse 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? <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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."
- a) The first thing to consider is that the crowds showing up here in "nowhere" is that they were willing to be baptized by John. It's kind of like thinking, "We've traveled all this way just to hear this guy. What if he's right and the Messiah is coming? Come on what can it hurt us to get dunked in water if he's right." You have to remember that Judaism is full of rituals. Therefore, to participate in one more ritual is to think, what can it hurt?
  - b) With that in mind, notice John the Baptist is not a "if it feels good, do it" type of preacher. The key point is John is saying, it's not enough just to go through this or any ritual! You have to put your actions where your thoughts are! If you are really sorry for the sins that you've committed, to use a modern expression, put your money where your mouth is.

- c) Specifically John refers to the religious people coming to see him as a "brood of vipers". It may help to keep in mind that John was the outdoorsman type who lived in the desert. If one has ever seen a forest fire up close, one sees animals fleeing to get away from the fire. Among those animals are snakes trying to slither out of it. One has to remember that in a Jewish mind, snakes are associated with Satan in the Garden of Eden story. John is saying you people are no better than that snake in the Garden of Eden thinking just performing a ritual can save one. The same concept applies to thinking one is saved just because one is Jewish as implied in Verse 8. The way this applies to you and me is to wrongly think we are saved because we are religious. We are saved only because of what Jesus did on the cross. As to doing good works, that's the next topic.
8. Verse 10: "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.
- a) John's answer is given in illustrations in the next four verses. The point here is to get the idea that people wanted the Messiah to come and they were willing to do anything so as to not be rejected by Him. Again, consider how oppressive it was to live under a corrupt government at that time let alone a corrupt religious leadership. It's as if the people were thinking, "You want us to dip in water? No problem! What else do we have to do so that we no longer have to live under this oppression?"
- b) With that said, we're ready to read John's response to this question:
9. Verse 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."
- a) Verse 11 essentially teaches that we should share what we have with those in need. So is John preaching communism or socialism? My answer is one of the 10 Commandments is "not to steal". (Exodus 20:15.) How can God forbid stealing unless He believes in private ownership? The idea is that there is nothing wrong with being financially successful. The point is to care about those in need. If we have more than we need, we should trust God will provide for us and we share what we have with others. To state the obvious, we can go broke real fast giving away all we have as fast as we can. It takes a little discernment to decide where and how to give to others.
- b) With that said, John's point in Verse 11 is simply to care about others. A sign that we are trusting God is that we care about the lives of others and not just ourselves.
10. Verse 12: Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"<sup>13</sup> "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.
- a) A little background on tax collectors may help here. Let's be honest, tax collectors aren't a group that has been loved throughout history. It was worse in this case as they were loyal to the hated Romans. The Roman government would give a tax collector a territory. The tax collectors then had to collect a specific amount as specified by Rome. They got corrupt by charging more and keeping the difference. Therefore the citizens hated tax collectors because they were both "Pro-Roman" and corrupt.
- b) With that said, notice John didn't say to them, "Quit your jobs and follow me." Instead he said, do your job but do it honestly. That alone is a great verse for tax collectors today, let alone anyone in the business world. God is not against earning a living. John is saying if you want to be right in God's eyes, do the right thing. Not to earn salvation, but to show that if we trusting God to guide our lives then the best thing for our lives is to follow His commandments again, not to earn salvation, but just as the best way for us to live.
- i) What is implied is that the tax collectors do officially get a fee for collecting taxes. What John preached against was cheating people in order to get rich.
- c) One has to admit, for someone who is preaching we can't work our way into heaven by say being a good person, John is still preaching to "do the right thing in life". This is not in any way contradictory to Jesus' message. The issue is how we should live once we submit to Jesus as our complete payment. Then we do the right thing as it's the best way to live.
- d) Meanwhile, it's time for another group to approach John:

11. Verse 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."
- a) It's always interesting to think in terms of what he didn't say. Notice that John didn't say, "hey, quit supporting the Romans and stop being a soldier." Instead he said to them, "be content with your pay and don't make false accusations". Throughout history I doubt any soldier has ever been content with his or her pay and it is usually barely enough to live on let alone thrive. The point is not whether or not they should stay soldiers, the point is if that's what you are called to do, do it honestly and be content what you earn.
  - b) Just like the corruption that occurred at the government at that time and the head priest family at that time, I'm sure there were corrupt soldiers back then. Notice the soldiers did care about the Messiah coming and instead of saying, "We have to fight him" or instead of saying, "We have to join him", these soldiers too wanted to repent of their sins to prepare themselves for Jesus' coming.
  - c) I should also add this verse is not saying we have to stick to whatever job we have in life. It's just saying if that's what we believe God is calling us to do at the moment, doing cheat our way through that job or situation and trust God to provide.
  - d) With that little set of speech's completed, it's time to see what happens next.
12. Verse 15: The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. <sup>16</sup> John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
- a) Picture a "wild man" living out in the middle of nowhere. Large crowds came to see him as people are tired of living under the corruption of their leaders. All throughout history, people have wanted an honest leader to solve their problems and make life fair. It's like the idea of people not knowing what is the solution to their problems, but they recognize the problems they have to deal with in their lives. Even with that background, the Jewish nation wanted a Messiah and wondered if John the Baptist might be that guy.
  - b) With that in mind, John wanted to make it clear that he was not the Messiah. John makes the statement in effect, "I baptize with water as a symbolic act to get you to realize that all of you need to turn from sin and I gave examples for different types of people how they should act based on that baptism. However, with all that said, I'm not the one you are expecting. The one who is coming is so powerful and I'm nothing compared to him. In fact, I'm not even worthy to untie his shoes".
  - c) As a background note, it was considered a job of the lowest slaves to undo sandals. John is just using that as an illustration of the power of the Messiah versus the power that God has given John for his role. Consider that John probably made a similar speech day after day as people traveled to the desert to see this wild man "do his thing". My guess is that one of John's disciples told Luke years later of a typical speech that John would make and that's how this story got to be part of Luke's gospel.
  - d) Finally, I need to talk about the last part of Verse 16 that says, Jesus will baptize all of you with the Holy Spirit and fire. It is the basis of that last phrase where a lot of Pentecostals do believe in special powers given to believers. With that said let me tell you what I think this expression means, knowing that there is debate within the church on that phrase.
    - i) First, I do believe it refers to what Christians call "The day of Pentecost". There is a Jewish holiday that occurs about 2 months after Easter. After "the" Easter, Jewish Christians were gathered together. That's when the famous story occurred where believers started speaking in different languages and the Spirit of God came upon believers so that they had God's power to preach the Gospel to others. This is all from Acts Chapter 2. If you know that story in Acts, Luke describes the divided tongues that suddenly appear as "fire". Fire burns things up. I see it as describing God working in our lives both to clean, kill and separate for His use.

- ii) I could probably give a whole lecture just on the history of the Christian church and the different interpretations of what John meant by the Holy Spirit and fire. To keep it simple, Pentecostal churches see this as God's power coming upon all believers in order to do special miracles to lead others to Him. Personally I just see it as describing what "the" Pentecost event was and the fact that all believers have some sort of gift to do things. If one is not sure what is one's gift, ask others who know you, what is it, you have a talent to do?" Then one should use that talent not for one's own enrichment, but to make a difference for God in this world.
  - iii) Meanwhile, John the Baptist is on a role, and it's time to get back to him.
13. Verse 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." <sup>18</sup> And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.
- a) I need to interrupt John's speech to explain a little about "threshing floors and wheat". To make it simple, Israel historically had a lot of land set aside for farming. One of the main crops grown was grain. When it was time to harvest grain, it would be cut and placed in a large pile. Then one takes a large shovel and scoop piles of grain in the air. There is a worthless aspect to the grain called chaff. It is light. and easily falls off the grain when it is thrown in the air. The heavier wheat falls to the ground and the chaff blows away.
  - b) The point is John did know a little about Israelite farming practice to understand how this process worked. John also understood that the crowds coming to hear him preach would also understand this illustration. Therefore, John used that illustration to make the point that just as farmers separated wheat from "chaff", so Jesus will have the authority and the power to separate those who trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins, versus those who want to trust in their own ability to please God based on their good deeds trying to outweigh their bad deeds. In summary, John is effectively saying, "Submit or suffer the eternal consequences of not submitting".
    - i) Also notice that John compares the destruction of the worthless chaff to fire. I take that as another clue as to what John said earlier about Jesus will baptize each of us with the Holy Spirit and fire in Verse 16. Again, we associate fire with destruction. I think Luke simply meant that Jesus "baptism" is about separating believers from nonbelievers for the purpose of separating us for God's use. Fire here is therefore associated with judgment as if to burn up what is useless. Now consider how God changes our lives once we are saved. That's the "fire part" of our salvation that all Christians go through.
  - c) Coming back to this text, notice there is no mention of Jesus by name. The whole message so far is essentially the Messiah is coming and one has to trust in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Even with that trust, one has to then live as God desires not to earn our salvation, but just because that is the best way to live. That's why John states how tax collectors and soldiers are to live out their lives after trusting in the coming Messiah.
  - d) For what it is worth, the historian Josephus who lived in Israel at that time, wrote more in his writings about John than he did about Jesus. I state that because I suspect that John's ministry was well known throughout Israel as "the wild man living out in the middle of nowhere preaching that the Messiah was coming." It shows God did give John the power and the boldness to preach God's message despite the unusual way and place that he was called to do so.
  - e) To finish the point about John, Luke makes the point that this is not all that John did in his life. Luke makes the point in Verse 18 that John preached other ways and to other people with the intent of trying to draw people closer to God by turning from their sins. That's why the angels told John's parents at his birth in Chapter 1 that John will be like Elijah the prophet as it's his job to turn people to God. The guilt question for us is what we doing to make a difference for God in our lives? That's what Christians are called to do.

14. Verse 19: But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of 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.
- a) These two verses are out of time sequence. To make a long story short, later during in the life of Jesus while He was going around preaching repentance and teaching that He was the Promised Messiah, John was still himself making an effort to lead people away from their own sins and pointing them to Jesus. Among the people that John criticized was the current political leader over the Israelites, one of the "Herod's".
  - b) If you remember from the opening of the chapter, the land around Israel was divided into four parts. One of those parts was ruled by what I call "Herod Junior". Like I implied in the lesson earlier, that whole family was to put it simply, really bad news. The Herod that John criticized married his half- brother's wife while his brother was still living. To state the obvious, publicly criticizing the man who rules over you is not good for one's health. When Herod found out about this popular preacher living in the desert making negative statements about what he did, Herod put John in prison and later killed him for daring to criticize him.
    - i) To state this saga another way, instead of doing what was right, Herod killed the messenger to try to avoid feeling guilty about his sins.
    - ii) Notice John the Baptist is never recorded as criticizing the Romans for conquering Israel. John never preached about politics or overthrowing the government. I'm sure John wasn't crazy about the Romans, but John's job, like ours is to get us to focus on God and live lives pleasing to Him. That's the only reason why John did pick on Herod as an example of how God desires for us to live and not live.
    - iii) The reason these verses are stated here is to say in effect, "Whatever happened to John after Jesus came on the scene?" The answer is he was put in prison and later killed for daring to criticize the sins of the person in charge of that territory.
  - c) With that said, we now come to another famous scene in the bible, John baptizing Jesus. In this scene the Holy Spirit comes upon John in the form of a dove. Let me list the verses and then I'll discuss them briefly.
15. Verse 21: 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."
- a) Let me start with a standard question: If Jesus was sinless, why did He need or desire to be baptized in the first place? In Matthew's Gospel, John asked Jesus that question (See Matthew 3:13). The answer is not for Jesus' sins, but for our sins. It was to show Jesus' willingness to be cleansed and used to pay the price for our sins.
  - b) I suspect that when John was a boy, his parents told him about Mary and how her baby is the Promised Messiah. I don't know if John recognized Jesus as a cousin or if there many years of separation made the relations as if, "I know who you are, but I haven't seen you personally so I didn't know what you looked like until now". My whole point here is that the act of baptism between Jesus and John was voluntary and John knew who Jesus was either by their previous relationship or God just revealing that information to John.
  - c) Then comes the big moment: Jesus being baptized. At that moment, somehow the sky opened up and the text says like (key word) a dove descending from the sky, something came down upon Jesus that we call "The Holy Spirit". At the same time, the crowd heard the God the Father say, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." If we want to see the "Trinity" all in one place, here it is.
  - d) That leads to the classic question of how can God be three entities in one? I've yet to find a perfect illustration for this, but I accept it as true. Some people describe the parts of an egg, (shell, yoke and fluid) as the "three being one", but I don't think it gives the concept of how can God be human and God at the same time. That's one reason why many can't accept Christianity, as they can't handle the idea of God being human at the same time.



- i) Here is an illustration that did help me a little: I had an evangelist just last week put a book in my hand and asked me to pretend that book was now part of me. He then asked, "am I still fully human?" Yes of course. However, now I am more than human as I am "fully God" (in this illustration) as whatever is in that book is now part of my nature. My point is Jesus was fully human and still fully God at the same time.
- ii) Let me end this discussion with my favorite little proof that Jesus never denied the concept of the Trinity. Jesus said we are to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). That text doesn't say the "names" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but just name. The word "name" implies unity with the three entities even though each has a separate function.
- iii) All of that leads me back to the text. The point is when Jesus chose to be baptized, not for any sins that He committed, but for our sins, we get a moment featuring God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all in one verse.
- e) This leads me to the topic of why did this visual moment occur? It was to show the crowd that God the Father accepted the idea of God the Son paying the price for all of our sins.
  - i) OK, why does Luke say it was "Like a dove descending?" Doves traditionally are associated with peace as they are not an attacking bird. I suspect that it was done that way to show us the peace we can have with God by accepting Jesus taking on the sins of the world on our behalf.
  - ii) As I like to ponder, how did Luke know all of this? I suspect that he interviewed one or more of John's apostles and an event like this would be remembered like it was yesterday.
  - iii) This event also reminds me that the world we see is not all there is. For those who deal in the world of molecules, they will correctly teach that there is more "empty space" than reality. For example, we may see a solid wood object in front of us. That wood is more "air" than wood. However, the molecules move in a way that gives us the appearance of a solid object. My point is simply that there is more to the world than we visually can see. At this one moment in time, God chose to show those watching the scene with John the Baptist and Jesus of the world that exists that is greater than what we can normally see. Again, it was done for our benefit to show that God the Father ordained and approved what Jesus was to do.
- f) With that said, it's time to talk about the next section of Chapter 3, "the genealogy" part.
  - i) First, let me give you the good news. I'm not going to go name-by-name through this section to explain who each of these people are. We have over 70 names listed that show Jesus' ancestry going back a thousand years earlier to King David and even a thousand years before that to Abraham and even way before that leading back to Adam. My big question is why is this here?
    - a) The short answer is to prove that Jesus was a descendant of King David. If you read through the New Testament, no one ever brought up the question of whether or not Jesus was a direct descendant of David. I'm sure if that was a question, it would have been debated. Yet nowhere in the bible or in recorded history is that question ever brought up.
    - b) Therefore, the point is the genealogy is here to prove to us that Jesus was really a descendant of David and not just a claim made by Him or those who were His disciples.
  - ii) While I'm on the subject of proof of who Jesus claimed to be, let me talk a little of the records that were kept for those thousands of years. Many years ago, when I visited my ancestral home in Croatia, the church in my hometown had records of baptisms going back hundreds of years. My point is it was common in cultures to keep such records if anyone wanted to look them up.

- iii) Even 600-700 years before Jesus was born, the Babylonians destroyed Israel. When the Israelites were taken into captivity, they were allowed to take with them bible scrolls and it is assumed the family records. Such records were kept at the temple and in effect anyone could visit that temple and research one's family history.
  - iv) I'm stating all of this to show that when Luke was in Israel, he could have easily visited the temple to do the research to show that Jesus was a direct descendant of all the people listed in the rest of this chapter.
  - g) With that said, there are a few interesting things to mention about Luke's genealogy that have some interesting applications once I explain them. With that said, I'll break down and actually start on the rest of the chapter.
16. Verse 23: 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,
- a) Let's start with the fact that Luke states Jesus was about 30 when he started his ministry. To backtrack a little, this means that other than what Jesus said when he was 12 years old talking to bible teachers in Chapter 2, we have no idea what Jesus did or said from then to this time when he was 30. I believe a main reason to mention His age is to show that He's now at an age where he would be considered "learned" in life.
  - b) I don't know if you've ever listened to a lecture by a person younger than yourself, but I do know it's hard at first. The church where I attend now for the first time in my life is lead by a pastor younger than me. It was an adjustment at first. My point is I don't think God wanted Israelites to say, "This is just a young kid. What does he know?" That is why Jesus waited until when He would be respected as one who's old enough to understand how the world works. I could site biblical examples of Old Testament figures who were at the same age when they started their ministry, but let's just leave it at the fact that Jesus was now old enough that He would be respected as one who should know better.
  - c) With that said, it's time to start the genealogy. As I stated, the good news is I'm not going to go through the 70 plus names given here. I'm just going to focus on some key facts and a few controversies based on this list.
  - d) First, notice the emphasis on the fact that Jesus was not really the direct son of Joseph, but just that people "thought that". Here's where the first controversy comes in:
    - i) The traditional view is that this list of names gives the genealogy through Mary's ancestry. It's as if to say, "Jesus we get the idea you were adopted by Joseph but if you were really a "blue blood descendant" of David, "then adoption doesn't cut it". That's why showing that Jesus was also a descendant of David through Mary's line is also needed.
    - ii) The alternative view (that I don't hold) is that this genealogy is also Joseph's line, but there's some adoption involved in the genealogy given in Matthew's Gospel, which is why they differ.
      - a) A key point is the genealogy given in Matthew's Gospel includes all of the Israelite (Southern Kingdom) kings, while Luke's genealogy goes through a different son of King David and avoids all the other kings.
      - b) The point is either way, Luke did his homework at the temple and this line of ancestry does lead to Jesus. Personally, I hold the traditional view that what Luke gives is Mary's ancestral line and that makes Jesus a true "blue blood" as a direct descendant of David.
      - c) This will be one of those trivial questions that I'll have to ask in heaven one day if I remember to think of it then.
  - e) Before I state the long list of names, let me pause for a moment to deal with the "why should we care" statement. The issue is proof of who Jesus is. As I stated earlier, you don't read in history or in the bible people questioning Jesus' ancestry. Therefore Luke states it for us based on historical research to prove Jesus is a descendant of King David.

- i) One has to remember that this is a "Jewish thing". God made an unconditional promise to King David roughly a 1,000 years earlier that his descendants would be kings and "THE" eternal king would be one of David's descendants. This is written in 2nd Samuel Chapter 7. Again when Luke wrote this, the historical records were available where anyone can research Jewish ancestry.
  - f) All of that leads me back to the "list". The traditional view is that "Heli" is the name of Mary's father. The reason Mary isn't named is again a "Jewish thing" where one focuses on the male descendants to prove one's tie to King David or to Abraham. Matthew states that Joseph's father was named Jacob (Matthew 1:16). Here in Luke it says the "supposed father of Joseph named Heli". The traditional view is that Heli was Mary's father's name while the alternative view that Joseph had two fathers: That view is that Joseph himself was adopted and Heli was his real father while Jacob was his adopted father. Again, I hold the traditional view and I promise to stop mentioning that at this point.
  - g) One more tidbit about Heli and then I can move on. In the original Greek language and in the Jewish culture of that time, when the text says "the son of Heli" that phrase can also be translated the "son in law of Heli". My point is whether you hold the traditional view that this refers to Mary's ancestral line or the alternate view that we're reading his biological family line, one can argue it correctly either way based on the original Greek translation.
17. Verse 24: 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 Josech, 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,
- a) First the good news. I haven't memorized this list and I don't think God expects you to memorize it as well. Here is what it interesting to catch. Remember that we are reading from "modern to ancient". Luke is working his way backwards in time. The last name in Verse 31 is King David. If you've ever read 2nd Samuel or 1st Kings, you might recall that David had numerous wives and a bunch of sons. Only one of his sons became the next king, which was Solomon. One of David's other sons is listed here, named Nathan.
    - i) Nathan was a half brother of Solomon. Both are listed in 2nd Samuel 5:14. There was also a prophet at that time named Nathan, who is a different guy. I suspect that David named his son Nathan after that prophet, but that's just my guess.
    - ii) The point is this male genealogy goes from the "supposed father of Joseph" all the way back to David and avoids all the other kings who were David's descendants.
  - b) Here's something else to consider that I mentioned when I taught Matthew's Gospel. One of the kings who was a descendant of King David was considered so wicked by God that Jeremiah the prophet put a curse on that king in effect saying, "No descendant of yours will ever sit on the throne of Israel" (Jeremiah 22:30). That was one reason for the virgin birth to occur was to avoid that curse. That's also another reason why I do believe this is Mary's genealogy as her line avoids that curse.
  - c) The good news about this genealogy is that it is mainly here to show that Jesus really was a direct descendant of King David and did fulfill the promise made to King David back in 2nd Samuel 7:12-16. With that said, remember why this is being stated: To prepare us for the coming of Jesus and to prepare the people for Jesus' ministry. This genealogy is for us to know that Jesus is the "blue blood" that He claims to be. But if all of those records were destroyed by the Romans, how can we prove it today? We can't. However, we can take the word of an accurate historian who obviously did a lot of research prior to that temple being destroyed. With that said, I can now finish the genealogy:

18. Verse 32: the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, 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.
- a) From Verses 32 to 34, the genealogy is fairly identical to Matthew's list. One could read through Genesis, Judges and 1st and 2nd Samuel and trace all of these names. It is also important to understand that the phrase "son of" can also be translated "grandson of" or "great grandson of". There is no word for "Grandfather or grandson" in Hebrew. That's because the idea of "son" can also mean "descendant of" as it does today. My point is if we have any missing generations, it is covered in the term translated "son of".
  - b) Note that Matthew's Gospel stops at Abraham, as if to say, "Jesus is definitely Jewish as he like all Jewish people were direct descendants of Abraham. Luke had a different purpose in mind when he wrote this genealogy, as Luke wanted to emphasize Jesus full humanity. That's why Jesus goes all the way back to Adam as a direct creation of God. It is to show in a detailed way that Jesus truly was fully human and fully God at the same time. That is why we get genealogies in three of the four gospels. Let me explain that one:
    - i) Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as the Promised Messiah. That's why the list in his genealogy of Jesus goes back to Abraham.
    - ii) Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' humanity. That's why the list in his gospel goes all the way back to the first human Adam as a direct creation of God.
    - iii) Mark's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as a humble servant. In effect the genealogy of a lowly servant is irrelevant, so Mark doesn't include a genealogy.
    - iv) John's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God. Therefore Verse 1 of Chapter 1 of John's Gospel is in effect a genealogy saying, "There is God and Jesus" and that along with the Spirit of God is it as far as who is God".
  - c) With that said, we made it through the genealogy hopefully without too much suffering.
19. Let me end the lesson by returning to my title: Preparing people for the coming of Jesus and preparing Jesus for the world". The first half of the chapter focused on John the Baptist preparing people for the coming of Jesus. The second half explained how God worked through a particular line of people to prepare Jesus to come in the world and verify that He is who He claims to be. The reason God wants us to know all of this stuff, is that it is our job as Christians to share our knowledge of Jesus with others and lead others into His kingdom. Just as John the Baptist did prepare people for Jesus First Coming, so in effect God calls us to prepare people for His Second Coming which is to judge people based on that knowledge. One reason we study our bible is to learn how Jesus was prepared for His role so we can share that knowledge with others. With that said, I encourage all of us to use our time to make a difference for Him in this world.
20. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, we thank You not only that You have come into this world, but also have given us the privilege of sharing that knowledge with others. While we can never be perfect in the knowledge we have about You, we can share what we do know and through Your power have the boldness to make a difference for You in this world. Help us to make that difference not to earn Your love, but just out of gratitude for what You have done and will do in our lives. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.