

# OpenTheo

## Luke 3



### **Gospel of Luke** - Steve Gregg

In this biblical commentary, Steve Gregg examines Luke 3 and the historical context surrounding the arrival of John Baptist and the adult Jesus. He discusses the importance of repentance and the role of baptism as an outward declaration of internal faith and repentance. The genealogy of Jesus is also briefly mentioned, with an explanation of the differences between the genealogies outlined in Matthew and Luke. Overall, the commentary provides a clear and concise overview of the themes and context of Luke 3.

### **Transcript**

We come now to Luke chapter 3, and now both John the Baptist and Jesus have grown up. We read about the birth of John the Baptist in chapter 1, and it was said of him in chapter 1, verse 80, the last verse of chapter 1, the child, meaning John, grew and became strong in spirit and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel. And we read in chapter 3 of that day, of that manifestation of John to Israel.

We also read of Jesus in the last verse of chapter 2, that Jesus, the boy, increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. So we have summary statements at the ends of chapter 1 and chapter 2 about these two boys growing up. And when we come to chapter 3, 18 years has passed since chapter 2. At the end of chapter 2, Jesus was 12 years old, and we shall find in chapter 3 and verse 23 that Jesus at this time is about 30.

In chapter 3, verse 23, it says, now Jesus himself began his ministry at about 30 years of age. Therefore, John was also about 30 years of age. They were six months apart in age, apparently.

At least we know that Elizabeth was six months pregnant with John when the angel came to Mary, and if we assume that Mary became pregnant shortly after that, then there would probably be about half a year difference in their ages. Now, Luke being much more careful than any other writer in the New Testament to attach the sacred history with secular history and let us know what was going on in the secular world at the same time and to fix the exact time and date of the events that he records, which the other

Gospels do not bother to do. In the opening of chapter 3, he gives us quite an elaborate designation of the year that we're talking about here.

He says, now in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip, tetrarch of Aeturia and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysannaeus, the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.

And the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Now, as far as these different rulers and the high priest given, we do know something about, we can pretty much fix the year of this.

It says it's the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius became Caesar in the year 14 AD. And yet they measured the reigns from September of the year, the Romans did, and he became king in October.

I'm sorry, I think he became king in September a month before September, not after. And so after he'd reigned for one month, the second year of his reign began. So he didn't reign 14 complete years, but 13 complete years after his coming to power and John showing up.

It's the 15th year. Technically scholars believe this was the year 27 AD. And Jesus' ministry, as we know, was either two and a half or three and a half years.

There's some disagreement because we're not given exact information on that, but we can calculate at least two and a half, if not three and a half years of Jesus' ministry. So the beginning of John and Jesus' ministry is in the year 27 AD. And Jesus then would have been crucified presumably in 30 AD or thereabouts.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea at the time that Jesus began his ministry. And of course, at the time that Jesus died, he was the governor there that Jesus stood trial before. And his governorship there was from 4 BC to, I'm sorry, from 26 AD to 36 AD.

So Pontius Pilate was in that position from 26 to 36 AD. Now Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee was from 4 BC, which is when his father Herod the Great died in 4 BC until 39 AD. So Herod was in power from almost, well, longer than the lifetime of Jesus really.

Jesus was born just before 4 BC, just before Herod died. And so in Christ's infancy, Herod Agrippa, we're talking about here. I'm sorry, not Herod Agrippa, Herod Antipas here.

There's lots of Herods in the Bible. This He came to power on the death of his father and he ruled over Galilee in the north and over Perea, which is the region on the east side of the Jordan River outside Israel proper. And he ruled until even for several years after Jesus was dead.

And Jesus did stand trial before Herod. Luke alone tells us so. The other Gospels leave that out, but Pilate sent Jesus to Herod because Jesus was a Galilean and technically Pilate said that was Herod's jurisdiction.

Herod is also the one who killed John the Baptist later. His brother, that is Herod's brother, Philip, was the Tetrarch of Aeturia and the region of Trachonitis, regions up to the north and east that we needn't concern ourselves much with since the story of Jesus does not take him into those regions. And it says, Lysaneas was the Tetrarch of Abilene.

Now, Lysaneas, it was once thought Luke was wrong about this, that Lysaneas was Tetrarch at the wrong time, not this period of time. He was known, for example, to be Tetrarch 30 or so years earlier than this. But there's some evidence from some records, some hints that he had a second Tetrarchy or it's a different Lysaneas from 4 BC to 34 AD.

Some of these lesser known rulers at the time, we don't have a lot of documentation of the Roman historians about them. We have reference to them or allusions to them. But we have Annas then the high priest and Caiaphas.

Actually, interestingly, although our translation says Annas and Caiaphas being high priests plural, in the Greek it's high priest singular. Israel was only allowed one high priest under the law. So why was Annas high priest and Caiaphas high priest? Why were they both high priest? The reason was that Annas was respected by the Jews as the high priest and seemed too powerful.

And so the Roman rulers removed Annas from power in the year 15 AD. Annas became high priest in 6 AD and was removed from power in AD 15 and his son-in-law Caiaphas was placed in his position because Caiaphas was not as powerful and popular with the Jews. Yet even though Caiaphas had been put in place as high priest by the Romans, the Jews of course recognized Annas because he was the legitimate high priest.

He did continue to exercise a bit of authority as high priest though Caiaphas officiated at the Sanhedrin and was involved in most of the functions of the high priest. You may remember when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, his captors took him first to the house of Annas and then to the house of Caiaphas. So they wanted to show Annas that they had caught him before they showed Caiaphas.

They were both recognized as high priest by different levels. Annas was recognized as the true divinely appointed high priest by the Jews and Caiaphas was the one the

Romans officially declared to be the high priest. Now what's interesting is it mentions all these important people.

The high priests were important people in Israel. They officiated over the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Israel. All these other rulers are Roman officials.

So the whole region is controlled by Rome and Rome has given the Sanhedrin some limited power of self-government. All these important leaders are mentioned and by contrast it says the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. In other words all these important people were around but the word of the Lord didn't come to them.

Instead the word of the Lord came to this guy living out in the desert eating grasshoppers and wearing camel's hair and God overlooked the principal people of the society and went to someone who was a relative unknown and his word came to him as to Elijah in the past who also lived in the wilderness. So he went out and he went into all the region preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Now that is to say you get baptized to declare that you have repented and you repent for the remission of sins so that sins are forgiven as a result of repentance and baptism is the mark that you have done that, that you have repented and therefore if people were going to repent they were supposed to declare it publicly with baptism.

Luke also wrote the book of Acts of course and in Acts chapter 2 when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and his sermon was completed in Acts 2.37 the people came to him and said, now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do? How do we respond to this gospel? What are we supposed to do about this information? And Peter said to them, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now what's interesting here is he said repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Many people have understood this to mean that baptism is for the remission of sins.

That is to say baptismal regeneration occurs. That you are forgiven when you are baptized. There are some groups that teach that you are not saved until you are baptized because you have to be baptized for the remission of your sins.

Now I don't understand it that way and I don't think Luke did either or Peter. What Peter said is repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins. You are supposed to be baptized as a mark of your repentance.

But which of those two? He treats the two as if they are a single thing. Which of those two really is for the remission of sins? We see Luke's answer in the teaching of John the Baptist in Luke chapter 3. It's a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. So the

repentance is the key.

Baptism is the sign of repentance having taken place for the remission of sins. It's not necessarily the case that baptism remits your sins. There are some statements by the way in the New Testament that sound as if baptism is what saves you.

When Ananias came to Saul on the third day after Saul had seen the light on the road to Damascus, Ananias said, what do you wait for? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord. So he said be baptized and wash away your sins. Some take that to mean well your sins are remitted or washed away when you are baptized.

Well maybe so. But he said be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord. It's calling on the name of the Lord that remits your sins.

You are baptized on the same occasion. At least in the first century it was understood that you should be. When people believed and repented they were baptized.

Essentially in rapid succession. They wouldn't wait until the next day. It was all a process of transferring from the world into the church, into the body of Christ.

People were not considered to be Christians until they were baptized. However, there were people who were not able to be baptized like the thief on the cross who nonetheless became believers and repented and had their sins remitted. So it's clear that it's not baptism itself but these other factors, these internal factors, your faith and repentance.

It's not the ritual that saves you. Nonetheless the ritual was never divorced from the inward experience in the minds of early Christians and so they often spoke about baptism as their conversion. Reasonably enough, it's like when you get married and the groom puts a ring on the woman's finger.

Is that the point at which they're married? Well, kind of. It's part of the whole series of things that happen. You take vows, you put on a ring, a preacher declares you man and wife.

All these things happen. At what point are you really married? Well you might say when the preacher declares you to be man and wife but it's not a declaration by a preacher that makes it so. What makes people married? It's the vows that make people married.

Well what about the ring? The ring is there as a sign that you've made those vows. Ordinarily the ring is put on at the same time as the vows but if the little kid who's carrying the ring loses it and the vows are taken anyway and they don't get the ring until a few days later when they find it again, the people were married when they took their vows. The ring is simply the sign of it and they can still be married even if the ring

doesn't show up right away.

And so it is what causes you to be saved is you're doing business with God in your heart, faith and repentance toward God. But normatively baptism happens at the same time. And I could say, you know, my wife and I were married when I put that ring on her finger.

Well technically it was when we took vows that we were married but I did put a ring on her finger at the same time so they spoke that way that we were saved when we were baptized. We washed away our sins when we were baptized but we were calling on the name of the Lord and that's what did it. Remember it says in Joel, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That's what saves you is the calling on the name of the Lord. Anyway, many people misunderstood baptism. John's baptism, by the way, wasn't the same thing as Christian baptism either.

And we know that because in Acts chapter 19 Paul met 12 people in Ephesus who had already been baptized with John's baptism but when they heard the gospel they got rebaptized in the name of Jesus. So it was not counted that John's baptism was the same as being baptized in the name of Jesus. John was simply preparing the way of the Lord as the quotation from Isaiah given here in verses 4-6 tells us.

He was preparing people's hearts. In order to receive the Messiah who was coming people had to repent of those things that were obstacles in their hearts to receiving him. Repentance was to pave the way, to make straight a way for the Lord to come and that's what it says in verse 4 and following as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet.

This is Isaiah 40 verses 3-5 saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low and the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places made smooth and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. What does this mean? In Isaiah chapter 40 the context appears to be the good news to the Jews in exile in Babylon that God is paving the way for them to return to Jerusalem.

They had been in exile for 70 years and God was now fulfilling his promise of returning them to their land to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple and so forth. This is the context of Isaiah 40, in fact of that whole section of Isaiah chapter 40-66. But in scripture the return of the exiles from Babylon is seen as a type and a shadow of the salvation that we have through Christ as he delivers us from bondage of another sort, a spiritual bondage to sin.

And so as God delivered Israel from Egypt in the Exodus and as he delivered them from Babylon in 539 BC through Cyrus, so he delivers his people spiritually through Christ. And so as you read of these prophecies in the Old Testament where there's actually good

news being proclaimed to the captives in Babylon that God is going to smooth the way for them and make the way open for them to come home to their land. He's restoring them, he's bringing salvation from bondage.

The New Testament writers invariably applied these prophecies to spiritual things through our salvation in Christ. And so as Isaiah 40 really opens the section of Isaiah that begins to discuss God's deliverance from Babylon, it also opens as far as the New Testament writers are concerned, the New Testament salvation history. And John is the beginning of that history.

He's that voice out in the wilderness crying out, make way for God to come. Now when he says every valley shall be filled and every mountain and he'll be made low, this is referring to the fact that in ancient times, of course, they didn't have good roads. We take roads for granted.

We can drive almost anywhere on good roads and if there's potholes once in a while, we think, boy, these roads are terrible. I don't know how anyone can travel on these roads. There's a pothole every few hundred yards.

Well, in those days, they would have loved to have our roads even in ill repair because they had to go over mountains and they had to go over rough terrain and they didn't have paved roads very often. Now, Rome had paved a number of main highways to make it easy to travel to and from Rome. And that's where the expression all roads lead to Rome came from because they wanted their troops to be able to travel easily in and out of Rome to the far places they were going throughout the empire to keep the peace.

But there was a custom in old times that if a village was going to be visited by the king or by a dignitary, usually those villages didn't have roads going to them and so the citizens were given advance notice. The king is going to be visiting your city in six months. You make the roads suitable for a king to travel on.

You got some bumpy roads, you smooth them out. You got some high spots, you level them. You got some low spots, you fill them.

The lowest places have to be elevated. The high spots need to be brought down. Every mountain is going to be made low.

Every valley is going to be filled. The crooked places have to be made straight. The king is coming and you shouldn't expect him to ride on a bumpy road when he comes to visit you.

You go out and prepare the way for him to come. And this is figuratively what John was doing, preparing the ways. And the king is about to arrive, you need to make a smooth path.

You need to remove the obstacles in your heart that will prevent him from coming into your heart, into your life and being received properly by you. And so this is John's message. And Isaiah predicted him.

And by the way, all the gospels pretty much identify Isaiah 40 with a prediction of John the Baptist. So it's not just Luke thinking this way. Verse seven, then he said to the multitudes that came to be baptized by him, brood of vipers, who weren't, which means a family of snakes, a brood isn't the offspring, a litter of vipers, snakes, deadly snakes.

These multitudes, he calls them a brood of vipers. Now I should point out that in Matthew's version, which is parallel to this in Matthew three, it specifically says when John saw that Pharisees and Sadducees had come to his baptism, he said to them, you brood of vipers. So Luke has him basically addressing the crowd, but Matthew tells us it was particularly the Sadducees and Pharisees in the crowd that he was directing his remarks toward.

And he says to them, you brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance and do not begin to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree, which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Now he speaks of the wrath to come. And if we excise this whole passage from its historical setting, we may think it's talking about the end of the world and hell and damnation and so forth as the wrath to come.

But obviously that was not imminent. The end of the world was not imminent at the time this was preaching. And John speaks as if the wrath is imminent.

He says the ax is already laid to the root of the trees. That means the man who's going to cut the tree down is already poised with his ax, measuring his stroke as he's touching the root of the tree with the ax. He's going to swing and that tree's coming down real quick.

This is something imminent, this judgment he talks about. And of course we have no difficulty when we know the historical setting knowing he's referring to the judgment that was coming on Israel. God was going to bring destruction on the nation of Israel.

It happened within the next generation in AD 40. And John was come to announce that. Now if you look back at Malachi chapter 4, you'll find that the Old Testament closed with the warning or with the promise and warning that God was in fact going to bring this judgment on Israel and that he'd send John the Baptist before he did so.

In Malachi 4.1 it says, for behold the day is coming burning like an oven and all the proud, yes all who do wickedly, will be stubble and the day that is coming will burn them



up, says the Lord of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch. Now that's the general destruction on Israel that will come. But he says to verse 2, but to you who fear my name, that is the faithful remnant in Israel, the son of righteousness, that's Jesus, shall arise with healing in his wings and you should go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

You see the remnant of Israel did go out of Jerusalem. They fled and did not succumb to the judgment because the son of righteousness arose. The day starved from on high, the day spring from on high visited them as Zechariah said in his prophecy in Luke chapter 1. The daybreak of the new dawn of the new covenant of the Messiah of his age came when the son of righteousness arose with healing in his wings.

That's why there's so many healings in Jesus' ministry. It was a fulfillment of this prophecy. His healings of individual sicknesses was to indicate that he was offering healing to the nation or to any of the nation that would have it, spiritual healing, because judgment was coming and people had a choice.

They could be among those that would be burned up like an oven, the proud who do wickedly and will be burned up like stubble, or they could be those who fear God's name and to whom the son of righteousness rises with healing in his wings and they'll go out of the city before it is doomed and escape it. And he says, if you look down in verse 5 of Malachi 4, the last two verses of the Old Testament, behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a curse.

Now, if your Bible says the earth, it could say that. The word Eretz is the Hebrew word. It can be translated land or earth, but the New American Standard, for example, translates it land and this is referring to the land of Israel.

This is talking about God's threat that Israel will someday come under utter destruction unless Elijah is able to turn their hearts around. Now, Jesus said to his disciples, if you can receive it, John is Elijah who is to come. The angel told Zechariah, as we saw in Luke chapter 1, your son John is going to come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the wicked and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

So, it's very clear the angel's announcement and Jesus' statement make it clear that John is the fulfillment of this prophecy. And why? I'm going to send Elijah to turn it around lest I strike the land with a curse. John's coming was the evidence that the curse, the judgment that will burn like an oven on the land is imminent.

And that's what John said. He said the axe is laid to the root of the trees, therefore every tree that does not bear fruits can be thrown into the fire. Like stubble, they'll be burned

up.

And every Jew who heard him speak was either of the faithful remnant who feared God's name and would be delivered or they were of that, they were a fruitless tree. One of those that would be burned up like stubble that Malachi has spoken of. So, this is John's message.

He's saying the judgment of which the Old Testament spoke is imminent. I'm the guy that God sent to warn of it. So, that this is your last warning or not maybe your last but it certainly is the last generation that will hear this warning.

Now, I would point this out too. So, he said who warns you to flee from the wrath to come in verse 7. This wrath is the wrath of AD 70 no doubt. Obviously, there's other wrath on the day of judgment and we would do well to flee from that as well but that's not specifically what he's talking about.

He's talking about something that's about to happen. The axe is right there poised to strike. Now, he says that they in verse 8 they need to bear fruits worthy of repentance rather than just saying we have Abraham as our father.

You see, it was the mentality of the Jews in many ages that just because they were physically descended from Abraham, this put them in a special class of favored people like their ancestry was something that God would hold in their favor but God doesn't have grandchildren. He only has children. You have to be personally a child of God to be on good terms with God.

It doesn't help to have had a parent or grandparent or an ancestor that was a child of God like Abraham or for that matter Billy Graham or any one saint. If they're one of your ancestors, that doesn't mean anything about you. Don't say Abraham's our ancestor.

We're good. He says no, God could raise up from these stones children of Abraham. Now, think about what that means.

Could God raise up literal children of Abraham from the stones? You might say well God can do anything so yes but wait a minute. Suppose God did take a stone and turn it into a Jewish looking person. Would that stone have ancestry going all the way back to Abraham? No, it has ancestry from being in a quarry somewhere.

It never descended from Abraham even if God made it into a Jewish looking person which God could do. He could turn a rock into a person. I'm sure he made dust into Adam.

He can make a rock into something, a child of Abraham but not a literal child of Abraham. What John's saying is to be a child of Abraham requires something different than natural descent because a stone that's made into a child of Abraham isn't descended from Abraham. It's not descent.

It's the present state of the individual heart like Paul said. He is not a Jew who's one outwardly. Neither is that circumcision which is outward and in the flesh but he is a Jew who's one inwardly and that is circumcision which is of the heart.

That's Romans 2 verses 28 and 29. In Philippians chapter 3 Paul said we are the true circumcision who rejoice in Christ Jesus, who worship God in the spirit and who put no confidence in the flesh. Well Paul was a Jew but his readers were Gentiles.

He said we're all, we're the true circumcision. In Galatians 3 Paul said if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Jesus was speaking to the Jews in John chapter 8 and they said we are Abraham's seed and he said I know you're Abraham's seed but if you were Abraham's children you would do the works of Abraham but you don't do that.

You do the works of your father the devil. So having ancestry going back to anybody saintly, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, anybody, any Christian saint. If you're descended from you know James the apostle himself.

I had to think of an apostle who had a wife or Peter you know. If you're one of Peter's descendants it wouldn't make you a Christian. It would just make you a person who needs to do your own business with God like anyone else and so he's saying don't boast that you have ancestry going back to Abraham.

That doesn't count for anything in itself. You need to produce personal fruits of repentance. Now he said fruitless trees are going to be broken down, cut down and thrown in the fire.

What fruit? What fruit are they lacking? They're lacking the fruit of repentance. He says in verse 8, therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. Now was John the Baptist more legalistic let's say than Paul? Some people say that Paul preached the true gospel for the Gentiles and that you know John the Baptist and even Jesus preached a gospel more for the Jews.

It was more legalistic but what did Paul preach about this? Look at Acts chapter 26 which by the way Luke also wrote but Paul preached. Acts 26 and verse 20 Paul is speaking to King Agrippa. He's on trial and King Agrippa is capable of advocating for him so he's trying to give his appeal to him and he says in verse 19, therefore King Agrippa I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision but I've declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and throughout the region of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent, turn to God and do works befitting of repentance.

So Paul said everywhere he preached this is what he preached that people should repent and do the works that are suited to repentance. That is if you are truly repented it'll be change your behavior. That's the same thing John the Baptist is saying.

You need to bear fruits worthy of repentance. It's easy to say I repent. It's easy to apologize especially if you got caught and you're going to jail or something or you're losing your job or your ministry because of some scandal you've been caught in.

It's easy to weep and cry on television and say I repent. Well let's see if you repent. I don't want to hear about it.

I want to see it. That's what John the Baptist is saying. I want to see you bear some fruits that are worthy of repentance.

Paul says you need to do works befitting repentance. This is nobody preached a different gospel than this in the scriptures. Certainly Jesus when he began to preach Mark's gospel tells us the first words of Jesus in Jesus ministry that are recorded.

Mark 1 15 Jesus said the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent therefore and believe the gospel. So repentance is John's message.

It's Jesus' message. It's Paul's message. It's the Bible's message.

People need to repent. They need to turn around. They need to change their mind about sin.

Repentance means change your mind and what specifically do you need to change? Well before you're a Christian you are sinning and you are making excuses for it. You're basically telling yourself I'm not that bad. Nobody's perfect.

I'm as good as anybody else. Sin isn't all that wrong. I've got good excuses for my sin and so forth.

There are mitigating circumstances when I did that bad thing. A person's excusing and justifying their sin and minimizing their sin when they're unbelievers. When you become a believer you stop doing that.

You say no my sin was not a small thing. My sin was unacceptable. It was a rebellion against God.

Sin is not okay. It's not okay for me to sin. Little sins, big sins, it doesn't matter.

I can't tolerate sin in my life anymore. That's how your mind changes about sin. You repent of your sinning.

Now it doesn't mean you never sin again but it means you don't want to ever sin again. It means you'll never justify your sins again. You see people do sin because of weakness but the question is once they've sinned what do they do with it? Do they make excuses for it? If so they haven't really changed their mind about their sins yet.

Do they minimize it? Then they haven't really repented properly. If you have repented then you know you've sinned. You grieve over your sin.

You don't want to do that. You've decided long ago you didn't want to ever sin again. You do sin and you rejoice in the grace of God and the forgiveness of sin but you don't make excuses for the sin.

You don't say well I can get away with this I guess. You don't turn the grace of God into license. We recognize that sin is an offense to God and we're lovers of God.

Why would you want to offend somebody that you love? And this change of heart, this change of mind results in different behavior obviously. If you're excusing your sin you'll never resist the urges to sin. If you've decided sin is not okay well then you're at least going to try to avoid it and you will much of the time and you're through your own weakness and imperfection you may fall sometimes but you'll not say that's okay.

That's how we know repentance takes place as people generally stop sinning and when they do succumb they don't make any excuses and they grieve and they apologize to God about it and basically seek his forgiveness. So this is John's message people. The nation needed to repent.

If they produced the fruits of repentance then they will not be a fruitless tree and they will not be cut down and thrown into the fire that's coming upon the nation. They'll be delivered but they shouldn't think that they'll be delivered simply by being descended from Abraham. That is not what cuts it with God.

He doesn't care who your ancestors are. God's never been a racist. He's never thought oh you're of the right race you're good you know.

That's racism. God's never been a racist. He's not a respecter of persons.

Every time Paul says God's not a respecter of persons in the context of God treats the Jews and the Gentiles the same way. They all have to believe in Jesus or be lost. God's not a respecter of persons and that means he's not a respecter of race or racial qualifications and so forth.

Why should he be? We think racism is wrong. I think God does too. Now verses 10 through 14 give us a rather interesting specimen of John's preaching and we don't get this specimen in the other Gospels.

Matthew and Mark and John all give us some of John's teaching but mostly summary fashion. We have some specifics given by Luke that aren't given in any of the other Gospels. Verse 10 says, So the people asked him saying what shall we do then? Now he's told them to repent and to bring forth fruits of repentance.

Well what is that fruit? What do you want us to do? What are you looking for? He answered and said to them he who has two tunics let him give to him who has none and he who has food let him do likewise. Then the tax collectors also came to be baptized and he said to them they said to him teacher what shall we do? And he said to them collect no more than what is appointed for you. Likewise the soldiers asked him saying and what shall we do? So he said to them do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely and be content with your wages.

So we see John giving specific instructions to the crowd. You got extra stuff share with people who are poor. You need to give to the poor.

This is what God has always wanted people to do. That's why God gives people extra stuff is so they can help people who don't have as much. Like Paul said that those who gathered much have no extra and those who gather little will have no lack.

That is the principle that God revealed in the manna in Exodus 16 and Paul in 2nd Corinthians says that's sort of a principle we should consider in our giving. We should consider that if we've gathered extra we should give it to people who've gathered too little. That is who have had no opportunity to gather as much.

To share to have a heart for the poor this is simply a way of saying love your neighbor as you love yourself. He's not really making a new principle here. That's the old law.

That's what Jesus later would say is the great commandment along with loving God with all your heart soul mind and strength love your neighbor as you love yourself. What's that mean? Do I feel good vibes toward my neighbor like I feel good vibes toward me? What if I don't feel very many good vibes toward me? What if I really have a stinking self-image and I don't really like who I am very much? Should I then not like other people? No. Loving your neighbor as you love yourself.

In the Bible love is principally seen in what you do. What do you do for yourself? You protect yourself. You take care of yourself.

You feed yourself. You clothe yourself. You avoid disaster for yourself.

You're committed to your well-being. Well, that's how you love yourself. You might not feel good about yourself but you'll still take care of yourself.

You'll still protect yourself from danger. You'll still cater to yourself and that is your love for yourself that you need to love others that way. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself then you're not going to really want to have two garments when someone you know doesn't have one.

Now we live in a land where it's hard to find people who don't have anything or at least who don't have access to things. Some people are really, really poor but they have

access to things if they would work or they have friends or parents or someone else who take care of them. But in the biblical times there were people who were absolutely destitute and couldn't do anything about it.

There's no welfare system. They apparently didn't have family connections. They were blind or lame and couldn't do anything or they're widows and orphans.

And to care for these people like you would care for yourself was to prove that you really had God's interest at heart because his great commandment is that you do that kind of thing. And then John applies that to two different groups. The tax collectors asked what they should do.

Well these tax collectors mostly were found on as very evil men and you might say to give up your tax collecting. Leave that job. But he didn't.

He said just don't collect any more than you're supposed to collect. Of course that's what the tax collectors often did is they had to give the Romans a certain amount so they'd charge the taxpayer extra and make their own profit. They'd skim off the top.

John said that's dishonest. You're exploiting your brethren. That's taking advantage of them.

Apparently he thought you could work for the government if you didn't cheat. You could even work for the government of the Romans as the tax collectors did and as long as you were honest. He didn't say they had to leave those jobs.

That's interesting. Likewise the soldiers came to him and said what should we do? Now in the King James Version he says do violence to no man. And when the King James Version was the only version we used it used to sound like well how do you how does a soldier carry out that instruction do violence to no man? Isn't violence kind of what soldiers are hired to do? I mean what's the army for but to break things and kill people? You know that's what the army's there for.

How can you tell soldiers to do violence to no man? You might as well tell them to leave the military. However we have to realize these were probably this was peacetime. There was no war going on but soldiers often would shake down citizens for money.

And actually the word do violence in the Greek here actually means to shake violently. And some translations say don't shake down any man. That is don't use your position as a soldier to intimidate people to give you money that they don't owe you.

And so the New King James has changed it to don't intimidate anyone or accuse falsely and be content with your wages. In other words be fair, be loving, don't be materialistic. These are the things that John said people have to repent and show these characteristics of if they want to be prepared for Jesus to come to them because Jesus is going to make

requirements like this too.

And so they need to start thinking along these lines in order to prepare themselves for the coming of Jesus and for them to be able to receive him as they ought to. Now it says oh I want to read you something from Josephus just for fun. Josephus is the Jewish historian who never you know never did become a Christian but he wrote Jewish history and he does have an interesting paragraph about John the Baptist.

It doesn't it's interesting that you can see that what he writes is totally independent of what the gospels write because he doesn't repeat what they say. But on the other hand it also confirms that the gospels are generally you know confirmed about John the Baptist ministry being what it was. This is in Josephus' Antiquity of the Jews.

It's book two I believe. No I'm sorry it's not it's book 18 and chapter five paragraph two. Josephus wrote this and this is on the occasion where Herod who had killed John the Baptist suffered a defeat in war and lost a lot of soldiers.

He says now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Baptist. For Herod slew him who was a good man and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue both as to righteousness toward one another and piety towards God and so to come to baptism for that the washing with water would be acceptable to him if they made use of it not in order to putting away or the remission of some sins only but for the purification of the body supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now what he's saying Josephus is always hard to understand but he's saying the baptism that John did was not John would not be satisfied for people to be baptized if they're just repenting of some of their sins.

But he wanted baptism to be an emblem of the washing of the body that corresponds with a total purification from all sin inwardly. So even Josephus who wasn't a Christian knew that baptism was an outward sign that required first the necessity of inward change and inward purification and repentance from sin. He says now when many others came in crowds about him that is around John for they were greatly moved or pleased by his hearing his words Herod who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might be put might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion for they seemed ready to do anything that he should advise thought it best by putting him to death to prevent any mischief he might cause and not to bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when he should be when it should be too late.

Accordingly he was sent a prisoner out of Herod's suspicious temper to Machaerus, that's the castle that Herod reigned in, I before mentioned and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of his army was sent as a punishment upon Herod and a mark of God's displeasure against him. So the interesting thing about this is



it doesn't mention that it was because of the accusations that Herod was committing adultery that John was put to death but rather in general that John was just too influential and could have raised a rebellion against Herod so Herod put him to death.

This is not as detailed in terms of giving the reasoning for his death but it doesn't contradict it. Certainly John denouncing Herod for his adultery would not have bothered Herod if John had not been very influential and so it's the influence of John turning public opinion against Herod that caused him to put John to death Josephus said. But it's interesting that here an entirely independent voice outside the Bible mentions John the Baptist in this way and confirms the essential things that the Bible says that he was preaching repentance and that people had to be baptized and he was put to death by Herod.

We have more and different details given in the Gospels but it's interesting when we have an external source not at all influenced by the Gospels confirming some of the information in it. Now verse 15. Now as the people were in expectation and all reasoned in their hearts about John whether he was the Messiah or not John answered saying to them all I indeed baptize you with water but one mightier than I is coming whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to lose.

Now as the the servants the slaves in the household would take this master's sandals off when he came in and wash their feet when they came into the house so he said I'm not even worthy to be his slave I'm not worthy to be one of those people who even washes his feet takes his sandals off and washes his feet when he comes in the house so you think I'm great well he's that much greater I'm not even I'm not he doesn't say I am his slave I'm not even worthy to be his slave he says he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire his winnowing fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his barn but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Now in Matthew these two verses or these two statements in these verses are connected with the statement in verse 9 here so that Matthew has three verses in a row in Matthew 3 that all end with the word fire he has the contents of verse 9 where it says that the fruitless trees will be cut down and thrown into the fire then he has the contents of verse 16 where he said Jesus will baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire and then he has the contents of verse 17 his winnowing fan is in his hand he's going to throw the chaff in the unquenchable fire these verses are somewhat separated in the way it's told in in Luke but Matthew puts the three verses in uh in order so that all three of them end with the word fire now what does it mean that Jesus will baptize with fire most Christians when they comment on this think of it as a positive thing it says he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire and they usually suggest that fire is maybe some accompaniment to the Holy Spirit when after all when the day of Pentecost came and people were baptized in the Spirit the fire appeared on their heads some people say fire represents zeal and boldness and we see that when you're baptized most right you get all fired up for God or you get on fire for Jesus or something like that some people think

fire represents trials that come on your life after you're filled with the Spirit and some people think other things some really kind of superstitious Pentecostals say you need a special baptism in fire which kind of makes a fiery wall around you that protects you from demons and things like this all kinds of superstitious stuff has been introduced uh and even some things that aren't superstitious but are I think mistaken all those views I just mentioned assume that baptism in fire is a good thing however John doesn't mean it as a good thing baptism in the Spirit is a good thing baptism with fire is the opposite thing we know this because he's just said there are two kinds of trees trees that have fruit trees that don't have fruit clearly the fate of the two kinds of trees is different from each other the trees that have fruit will not be cut down the trees that don't have fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire likewise the wheat and the chaff in verse 17 wheat has a different destiny than the chaff the wheat will be gathered into the barn the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire what John is saying is there are two kinds of Jews listening to me right now he says there's those of you who are part of the apostate and there's part of you who are part of the remnant who are faithful the ones who are fruitful are the fruitful trees and the wheat they'll be preserved the apostate are like the fruitless trees and the chaff that will be burned in unquenchable fire and when Jesus comes he's going to have a double baptism one for one group and one for the other he's going to baptize with the Holy Spirit he's going to baptize with fire the word baptize means immerse or overwhelm and so he's going to immerse one group in the Holy Spirit he's going to immerse the other group in fire fiery judgment in the context of John's preaching fire is not a positive thing to anticipate it's a negative thing it's where the fruitless trees go it's where the chaff goes it's where the remnant are those who are not the remnant the apostate are going they will end up experiencing that fire now it's true that John says at the end of verse 17 he'll burn the chaff with unquenchable fire and sometimes the word unquenchable fire conveys the notion to our minds of eternal fire like hell however if you look in the Old Testament you'll find that the judgment on Jerusalem from the Babylonians is referred to regularly as God's wrath as unquenchable fire for example in Jeremiah just some examples there's lots of them but in Jeremiah 7 he's talking about God's wrath coming on Jerusalem when the Babylonians would come and destroy the nation and in chapter 7 verse 20 Jeremiah says therefore thus says the Lord God behold my anger and my fury will be poured out on this place meaning Jerusalem in the temple on man and on beast on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground and it will burn and not be quenched it's unquenchable all right also in Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 27 but if you will not heed me to hallow the Sabbath day such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day then I will kindle a fire in its gates that is Jerusalem's gates to bring judgment on Jerusalem through Babylon and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched what will not be quenched the fire it's an unquenched unquenchable fire this is very common language of judgment when Ezekiel also talked about the destruction of Jerusalem in Ezekiel chapter 20 verses 47 and 48 Ezekiel 20 47 and 48 he says and say to the forest of the south that would be probably uh the negative south of Jerusalem hear

the word of the Lord thus says the Lord God behold I will kindle a fire in you and it shall devour every green tree and every dry tree in you the blazing flame shall not be quenched and all faces from the south to the north shall be scorched by it all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it and it shall not be quenched again and again the prophets speak of God's judgment on Jerusalem through the Babylonians as a fire of his wrath which will not be quenched now will not be quenched is not the same thing as shall never go out quenched means to be put out to quench a fire is to put it out it's not for it to burn out it's for it to be snuffed out you quench a fire by pouring water on it or by snuffing a candle flame you quench it that's what quench means to put out a fire what he's saying is when I when my wrath is expressed toward you as a burning fire no one's going to be able to put it out he doesn't mean it's going to go on forever and ever necessarily but you're not going to put it out no no one can resist this no human being can quench this fire of mine it's going to do its duty and it's going to burn everything up this is not as many people mistakenly think some kind of reference to the afterlife or to the fires of hell although it may well be that the fires of hell will never be quenched this is not the context this is not the message of John the Baptist in the context he's talking about what's going to happen to the faithful remnant versus what's going to happen to the apostate in Israel and it says in verse 18 we're talking about loop 3 now again and with many other excerpts uh exhortations he preached to the people but Herod the Tetrarch being rebuked by him concerning Herodias his brother Philip's wife and for all the evils which Herod had done also added this above all that he shut John up in prison now we're going to later read that John was put to death too and by the way this is mentioned out of out of chronological order because we're going to read next about the baptism of Jesus which obviously happened before John was put in prison but since Luke is telling about all the things that John preached he goes on to say and this got him in a lot of trouble eventually he got put in prison by Herod for it and he mentions that in advance though really chronologically that doesn't happen at this point in the narrative it happens later on verse 21 now when all the people were baptized it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized and while he prayed the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon him and a voice came from heaven which said you are my beloved son in you I'm well pleased now this statement is uh no doubt borrowed from some old testament statements um most scholars would agree that Psalm 2:7 which says you are my son this day I've begotten you is behind this statement where he says you are my beloved son also uh Isaiah 42:1 talks about the servant of the Lord in whom God is well pleased both passages in the old testament 42:1 of Isaiah and Psalm 2:7 are messianic and Jesus is here in the water and his voice speaks obviously identifying him as the Messiah of which these verses in the old testament speak now here it says you are my beloved son I believe Matthew also has it that way you are my beloved son but Mark I may be confusing Mark and Matthew in this case but I believe it's Mark that has the words are this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased so Matthew and Luke have it the word spoken to Jesus you are my beloved son Mark has it as if the words are spoken to John the Baptist saying this is my beloved son

and in john chapter 1 we have john testifying i was there and i saw the spirit come down and i can testify because i was there and i saw that this is the john heard the voice as well as jesus did it's probable that jesus heard it as you are my beloved son and john heard it as this is my beloved son there's no reason why the statement can't be modified in the ears since it was supernatural anyway in the ears of different hearers matthew is the one that says this mark also agrees with luke and says you okay i knew that one of them was different now the rest of this chapter we're going to just pass over it rather quickly is the genealogy of jesus it says now jesus himself began his ministry at about 30 years of age being as was supposed the son of joseph the son of heli the son of methat and so forth on back to adam now we have a genealogy of jesus in matthew chapter 1 verses 1 through 16 and it's different and this has been a problem for some people they say well jesus you know joseph couldn't have had two different genealogies now some say he could have there's there are some who try to solve this by saying joseph himself had two different parents one was a an adoptive parent and the other was his natural parent and we have the genealogy of his natural parent in one place and of his adoptive parent in another place this is not necessary to say and there's certainly no evidence that this is the right answer it's just an attempt to explain why the two genealogies differ from each other as they do but the fact is in my opinion we probably have mary's genealogy here and we certainly have joseph's in matthew matthew is unambiguously joseph's genealogy actually says jacob begot joseph the husband of mary of whom was born jesus so so we're told in matthew this was the the genealogy of joseph who married mary and the matthew genealogy of course is kingly it's from david on down it's all the kings of judah david solomon rehoam and the rest all the way down to jeconiah the last of them matthew makes it very clear that joseph descended right down through the kingly line every generation from david on now this genealogy has david in it too but it's not the kingly genealogy because david is in it but in verse 31 it says as we go backward in time it says uh the son of melia the son of men and the son of matthew uh the son of nathan the son of david the son of jesse so we can see that this genealogy does not go through solomon david's son but it goes through nathan another son of david and this was not the royal genealogy this is just another genealogy that goes back to david so these are different genealogies but is this joseph's or is it mary's like i said clearly matthew gives joseph's but why would you say this is mary's is there any evidence of it how does verse 23 read it says now jesus himself began his ministry about 30 years of age being as was supposed the son of joseph the son of heli now you might notice there's some italicized words here the term the son in all of these verses the term the son is in italics which means it's not in the greek the italicized words in the bible are not in the greek they're supplied by the translators so it would really say joseph of heli of mathat of levi of melchi and so forth all the way down of of can mean descended from you could be i mean jesus was of abraham but that wasn't his dad of the first generation you it could be your grandfather your great-grandfather that you were descended from and some believe that heli was jesus's grandfather mary's father now notice joseph is in the picture but it says jesus was imagined or thought to be the son of joseph but luke

has already made it very clear jesus was not the son of joseph in chapter one when mary said how can i have a child i don't know a man the answer said well the holy spirit's going to come upon you and the power of the highest going to overshadow you and you're going to baby that way you're going to be a virgin and so luke has made it clear that joseph is not jesus father but he says that the community generally regarded jesus as joseph's son jesus at 30 years old was regarded to be joseph's son but in fact he was of heli now there are some parentheses here that could be moved around because they're not in the greek and it could be that you'd say in parentheses as was supposed the son of joseph close parenthesis okay so jesus at age 30 in parenthesis was thought to be the son of joseph but then close the parentheses he was really of heli heli would be his nearest male ancestor which since he had no father would be his maternal grandfather this may seem ingenious and you know calculated to overcome a problem well it is but it's likely to be true for two reasons because luke has been following mary's side of the story all the way through the birth narratives matthew follows joseph's side all the through the birth narratives joseph tells us nothing of mary's side joseph tells only about joseph's side and gives joseph's genealogy luke tells us nothing of joseph's side of the story only mary's side and would presumably give mary's genealogy also now besides that if this isn't mary's genealogy then we have mary's genealogy nowhere that is we don't know mary's genealogy if this isn't it because there's no other record of it if this is it we know where mary came from if this isn't it we have no idea where mary came from and if we don't know where mary came from we don't know where jesus came from because mary was jesus only parent only human parent the genealogy of jesus has got to be traced through the bloodline of mary and the messiah has to be traced back to through the bloodline of david absolutely essential the messiah must be the son of david if he is not then he's not the messiah if this is not mary's genealogy then we have no idea if jesus was descended from david or not clearly it would be important for the gospel writers to establish that therefore i'm convinced that we have here mary's genealogy not joseph's there are different opinions available but that's the one that i have concluded and we don't have time to go over all the names it wouldn't even be profitable most of them are really unknown to us other than their name but we can see that luke actually takes the genealogy back to adam matthew's genealogy only goes back as far as abraham because he's writing for jews but luke's writing for gentiles and all people and so he shows the connection of jesus back to the human race back to the beginning to adam the son of god and so we'll come back to chapter four next time