

Prepare the Way of the Lord Luke 3:1-6

Context:

Luke 3:1-6 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, [a] make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

1. V 1-2a Luke decides to give a historical context:
 - a. Historical context gives meaning to the event described.
 - b. He starts at the top with the emperor: Tiberius Ceasar: history records that Tiberius began his reign in AD 14. Luke states that it was the fifteenth year of his reign, which brings us to the year 29 or 30 AD. – Adam Clarke
 - c. Pontius Pilate was governor of Juda, and Herod ruled Galilee, and some other local officials.
 - d. Spiritual Leadership Annas and Caiaphas. Annas was high priest from AD 6-15. He was installed and then removed by Roman officials but continued to exercise influence through his sons and son-in-law Caiaphas who was installed as a type of deputy of the high priest and was referred to as a high priest with the term Sagan, which meant deputy.
 - e. Each of these people mentioned by were murderers.
 - i. Herod killed John
 - ii. Pilot was known for various slayings, such as one mentioned in scripture where certain Galileans who had their blood mingled with their sacrifices.
2. V 2b – 3 “the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

- a. “The word of God came to John” which means that the Spirit of God came to John with a message for the people. This was a common phrase in the old Testament when a prophet was given a message.
- i. For example, **Ezekiel 1:3, Jonah 1:1-2** “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”
 - ii. The language here puts John in the category of a prophet, with the authority of a NATIONAL level prophet to deliver a message from God.
 - iii. We know that he came clothed in camel’s hair and eating wild honey (**Matt 3:4**), which would have reminded the people of Elijah, that is not a mistake, this is exactly what he was.
 - iv. Jesus calls John, not only a prophet, but the greatest of all prophets
Matt 11:11
 1. John Fulfilled spiritually the prophecy of the return of Elijah **Matt 11:14**
 2. **Malachi 4:5-6** “5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”
 3. It was now time for him to start his ministry.
- b. Look at his message: he was proclaiming a BAPTISM of REPENTANCE for the forgiveness of SINS.
- i. Baptism: The Greek word here is baptisma. It literally means to submerge a solid into a liquid and could even be translated submerged.
 1. There is a parallel in the Old Testament, Jewish Rabbis call the tevilah, which was the ritual washing or “rachatz” **Lev 15:5-8**. This was different because this washing would have been to cleanse from ritual, ceremonial uncleanness.
 2. Different from the baptism of Christ **Acts 19:1-7** “And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland[a] country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said, “Into what then were

you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.” 4 And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in[b] the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.”

3. John's Baptism Does not symbolize death, burial, resurrection spiritually to new life in Christ as explained in Romans 6. Rather it was about turning from sin.

ii. Repentance - metanoia – to change one's mind, decision, or behavior. Turning from a life of sin to turn to a life of obedience.

1. Not really possible, is it, without Christ? Without the Holy Spirit? You can see how John's comparatively weak ministry, though glorious in its own way, was in Preparation for something greater.

iii. Forgiveness of Sins: Why? It made one OPEN to salvation because of their stance toward sin.

iv. **Luke 3:10-14** “10 And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” 11 And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics[b] is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

3. V4 – 6 “4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

a. This is a quote from **Isaiah 40** and the context is all about comfort and the coming of the Messiah as in **verse 11** “He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”

- b. I like this verse because it is an interesting example of what I have seen in scripture when prophecy is given as a mixture of literal statements and figurative pictures.
- i. V4 Literal: The VOICE of what crying in the WILDERNESS: This was exactly and literally what John the Baptist was.
 - ii. V5 Figurative: Make His paths straight MEANING
 1. Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be made low, the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways. MEANING: Preparation... the WAY had to be made clear for passage? How so?
 - a. Every valley shall be FILLED: Those that are low, that is discouraged and hopeless, will be elevated by the hope of grace.
 - b. Every mountain and hill shall be made LOW: Those that are self-righteous and self-reliant will be humbled.
 - c. The crooked shall become straight: Those whose hearts are crooked will see what it means to be righteous.
 - d. The rough places shall become level: those things that would have remained an impediment or barrier to faith will be removed.
 - iii. 6V Figurative: All Flesh shall see the salvation of God MEANING:
 1. John would be heralding in a message that was intended to go Global.
 2. No longer was just a corner of the world privileged with some revelation from God, but now messengers would be sent throughout the whole world.

Application

1. Trust God in Times of Political Tension and Upheaval

- a. We see God often working in times of political upheaval, for instance with King David, the Prophet Daniel, Ruth, and here in this passage, the first coming of the Messiah.
- b. Don't let the political climate of tension and fear shake you. We know that these things are prophesied, and they were prophesied so that we would not be shaken in our faith.

- c. Purpose **Matt 24:3-7** “3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” 4 And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. *See that you are not alarmed*, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”

2. Repent of your Sins

- a. The voice of once crying out in the wilderness to repent. It is still calling to us, isn't it?
- b. But there is a difference. We now know who John was talking about when he said, “One comes after me, whose sandal I am not worthy to loosen.”
- c. We also now know that true repentance is the fruit of true faith.
- d. **Acts 16:31** “And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

3. All Flesh will see the salvation of God. This is our prophetic timeframe. Fearless Faith.

- a. Great Commission **Matt 28:18-20** “18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- b. All the nations shall hear **Matt 24:14** “14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- c. All the Nations will see Christ when He returns. **Matt 24:30** “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”