

That You May Know The Certainty

LESSON 4: PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH (LUKE 3:1-4:13)

Luke has explained the births of both John and Jesus and shown that they both grew. Details about their childhoods are extremely limited. However, full details are ultimately unnecessary to the larger point of Luke's gospel. Now, we will fast forward to the time both John and Jesus came to the public attention and began their ministries.

THE WORK OF JOHN, THE BAPTIZER (LUKE 3:1-20)

3:1-6. Luke identifies six leaders to help establish the timing of the beginning of John's ministry (around 26-29 AD, depending on various factors). Annas was the former high priest who still possessed considerable influence and Caiaphas was the present high priest. This is the time the word of God came to John in the wilderness (Luke 1:80). He then began proclaiming God's message throughout the region of the Jordan River, with many people responding in obedience to it (Matthew 3:1, 5; Mark 1:4-5; John 3:22-23). This message involved the need for repentance (a change of mind toward sin) and baptism (immersion in water) for the forgiveness of sins, anticipating the One who would come to provide the sacrifice for sin (Acts 19:4). This work fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3-5) of the voice crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord, as one would prepare the way for a king and make his path easier. In John's work, hearts would be prepared for the Messiah by their humility and corrections from sin. Ultimately, God would make salvation available to everyone (both Jews and Gentiles).

3:7-14. Many came to hear and be baptized by John. Some of these included Pharisees and Sadducees (two prominent sects of Jews, Matthew 3:7). John identified them as offspring of vipers fleeing the coming wrath of God. Apparently, they had come to John insincerely – perhaps to be baptized so they could appear righteous. What God was requiring, however, was true repentance which would produce life changes (fruit) consistent with repentance (Acts 26:20). Being a child of God required more than just being descended from Abraham. It required true

faith and devotion to Him (John 8:38-47; Romans 2:28-29)! Those who wanted to know what they should do (asked three times) were all taught to produce fruit consistent with repentance. So, they were to be generous and share with those in need of food and clothing (Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 18:7; 1 John 3:17). The tax collectors (who would often collect more than required) were to be honest and fair and not collect any more than was authorized (Matthew 7:12). The soldiers (who would often abuse their authority for intimidation and personal gain) were told to be satisfied with their wages and be honest and fair (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

3:15-20. As the Jewish people were expectantly waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:25, 38), the people questioned whether John might be the Messiah. However, John made it clear that there was One coming who would be far superior to him. John was not even worthy of the servant's job to untie that One's sandals. Furthermore, while John baptized with water, this One would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48) and with fire (likely a reference to Hell for those who reject Him, Luke 3:9, 17). Jesus would separate the righteous from the wicked as one separates the chaff from the grain, gathering the grain into the barns and burning the chaff with unending fire (Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:14-15). John also accomplished many other works in preaching the good news of salvation to the people. His earthly life was later ended by Herod Antipas, who had John put into prison and beheaded because he disapproved of Herod's marriage with his brother Philip's wife (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29).

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (LUKE 3:21-22)

3:21-22. During the time people were coming to be baptized by John, Jesus also came to be baptized by him. Although John initially protested (Matthew 3:13-14), Jesus desired to be baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15; apparently to do all the will of God, not because He had any sin). Jesus prayed and heaven opened. The Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove upon Jesus (indicating to John that Jesus was the Messiah, John 1:29-34) and the voice of the Father declared Jesus to be His beloved Son, with Whom He is well-pleased!

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS (LUKE 3:23-38)

3:23-38. Luke says Jesus began His earthly ministry around the age of 30 (the same age priests began

their service, Numbers 4:3, 47, and David became king, 2 Samuel 5:4). Thus, we are prepared for Jesus to take center stage in Luke's gospel. Before this, Luke is detailed about Jesus's genealogy. Differences in this record and Matthew's (Matthew 1:1-17) may be explained by Luke's genealogy recording Mary's ancestry and Matthew's recording Joseph's ancestry. Regardless, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of coming through David, Judah, Abraham, etc.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (LUKE 4:1-13)

4:1-13. After being baptized and the Holy Spirit coming on Him (Isaiah 11:2-5; 42:1; 61:1-3), Jesus left the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days. During this time in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by Satan (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15). Then, Luke records three specific instances of Jesus being tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). First, Jesus was tempted to prove Himself to be the Son of God by using His power for the self-serving purpose of satisfying His hunger and turning the stone into bread. However, Jesus quoted Scripture to defeat the temptation, recognizing the spiritual food of God's word is more important than physical food (Deuteronomy 8:3). Second, Jesus was taken (to a high mountain, Matthew 4:8) and offered to have authority and glory over the kingdoms of the world without having to suffer to establish His kingdom if He worshiped Satan. However, Jesus quoted Scripture to defeat the temptation, knowing God expects people to only worship, serve, and fear Him (Deuteronomy 6:13). Third, after Jesus had used Scripture against Satan, Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and used Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12) to try to convince Jesus to test God and prove He is the Son of God by throwing Himself from the temple, letting God's angels rescue Him. However, Jesus quoted Scripture to defeat this misuse of Scripture, knowing God must not be put to the test (Deuteronomy 6:16). Then, the devil left Jesus for a time (James 4:7).

CONCLUSION

The people throughout the region surrounding the Jordan were being prepared for Jesus's ministry by John. Jesus had been declared by God to be His Son. And, Jesus had now experienced great victory over Satan by resisting temptations. The time for the Messiah's ministry on earth had now come!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What was John's mission, work, and message?

What did John teach those who wanted to know what they should do?

How did John differentiate himself from the Messiah who would come?

What happened to John at the end of his life?

What was significant about Jesus's baptism?

Why was Jesus's genealogy important?

What is the significance of Jesus being tempted?

How did Jesus respond to every temptation He faced?

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