

## LUKE 3-4

### 3: 1-20 – The Proclamation of John the Baptist

The passage starts by listing all the rulers over Israel at the time – Roman and Jewish. John the Baptist stands against them in some significant ways. He calls for repentance. Those who are marginalized, those who feel judged by life, those who are suffering and have failed in life come readily to John in a spirit of repentance. The promise is not success and prosperity. The promise is not more power and status. The promise is forgiveness of sin. Sin is everything that is distorted in how we relate to others, how we see ourselves and how disconnected we are from God. Forgiveness is the promise that God has opened a door for things to get right again. Our spirit of repentance is a commitment that we are open and ready for inner and outer change.

John's call to repentance has a flip side – judgement. Those who think they are automatically blessed by God because they are Jews or because they are morally upright, follow the law of Moses zealously, and sacrifice at the temple regularly are in for a surprise. God desires a sincere heart and a generous spirit. God desires a heart full of love not greed and self-interest. Heart-change is necessary not just doing the right things.

John tells people what they must do. It's pretty straightforward and simple. But straightforward and simple is often not what people want to hear. It means giving up ways of living that serve our selfish interests.

The religiously and politically powerful despise John. He tells the truth publicly and openly. He embarrasses them and undermines their power and authority. Herod imprisons him.

### 3: 21-22 – The Baptism of Jesus

By submitting to John's baptism, Jesus is also embracing John's ministry. He is aligning himself with John and against the establishment. The fact that the Holy Spirit comes upon him at his baptism and God confirms Jesus as the unique beloved one of God, also affirms that John is on the right side of God's will. Jesus and the Holy Spirit within him will now begin to take on a public role. As John is silenced by imprisonment and eventual execution, Jesus takes up the prophetic mantle.

But already, the difference is apparent. John proclaimed that he was not the messiah, that one was coming soon after him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. John's baptism was preparing hearts in humble openness for the ministry of the Messiah. Jesus receives the Spirit and is identified by God's voice as the one. Now the ministry of the Messiah begins!

### 3: 23-38 – The Ancestors of Jesus

Even though Jesus is the Messiah of God conceived by the Holy Spirit, he is also fully a human being with a lineage. The lineage is important for fulfilling the role the Messiah will play. The Messiah has to be a descendant of King David, and obviously a Jew as well. But Luke's genealogy of Jesus also reminds readers that Jesus' lineage goes all the way back to the first human. Jesus is the Messiah not just out of Israel and for Israel, but for the whole world.

### 4: 1-13 – The Temptation of Jesus

Now that Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit (with a call of God as Messiah), he goes to the wilderness to be by himself and discern his path ahead. He has picked up a lot from John, but his path will be different. A big part of his discernment is to engage those contrary currents in his spirit that will interfere with God's plan. The three temptations are all about Jesus using his gifts and power for building up his own power, wealth, security and status, rather than serving God's will. God's will for Jesus will also put him at odds with the authorities. This will also compromise his security, his chances of prosperity and any success he may gain in the world. Jesus succeeds in silencing the voice of Satan within him. But we're told that Satan will come back. As long as we're in this world and this life, the demonic is always a force we have to contend with. So it is for Jesus.

### 4: 14-15 – The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Jesus begins his public ministry where he grows up (Nazareth) and where his family now lives (Capernaum) both of which are in the northern region of Galilee. He begins to teach where people gather publicly – before, during and after synagogue worship on the Sabbath when they're off work. The stories, healings, exorcisms and interactions with various people all take place during such occasions.

### 4: 16-30 – The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

Jesus is given the honour of reading the appointed scriptures on a given Sabbath in his home town of Nazareth. The hometown boy has returned a man. But the reading from Isaiah becomes an occasion for Jesus to talk about himself as the Prophetic-messianic figure referred to by Isaiah. People react quite negatively to this. The messiah can't be this man whom we knew as a peasant boy. He can't be the one!

Jesus responds by saying that only those who are open to him and receive him will experience the blessing and salvation of God he has come to bring. Those who reject him will be left out, by their own choice. This isn't heard very positively. They try to attack Jesus, but he manages to escape.

#### 4: 31-37 – The Man with an Unclean Spirit

Jesus is casting out demons. Demon possession is equivalent to mental illness of sorts. In a context of violence, extreme poverty and social unrest, people carried trauma in different ways. Salvation had to be mind and body as well as soul. The whole person is implicated. In an age before modern medicine, faith healers were very much sought after. Unlike other healers, however, Jesus has unusual authority to heal in his own name and by his own power rather than in the name of God or through a higher power. People are astonished at this. Also, those healed don't just thank him as a healer, they bear witness through their demonic outbursts that Jesus is God's very beloved one. He has power over them because he has the power of God.

Through his healing and exorcising, Jesus is serving notice to Satan and the forces of evil and suffering. He has come to bring the salvation of God. Healing doesn't mean all is well. Healing means that God has begun to redeem people and a new possibility for life has opened up. Satan's rule (a fatalism that evil and suffering are unbeatable) is being overcome.

#### 4: 38-41- Healings at Simon's House

Jesus continues his healings. Simon's (who will be named Peter) mother-in-law, who is also a recipient of Jesus' healing offers her service and home as a base for Jesus to offer his ministry of teaching and healing. Those healed have the opportunity to spread God's redemption in their own lives. Simon's mother-in-law gives what she has.

#### 4: 42-44 – Jesus Preaches in the Synagogues

Jesus takes some time to be alone. He is human with very human needs. But he also tells people that he has to keep moving so that he spreads his message to other regions. His message is about the 'kingdom of God' (which we'll learn about more specifically as the gospel unfolds). Healings and exorcisms are an opportunity to gather crowds and a way of demonstrating that the rule of evil can be overcome with the power of God Jesus gives to those who will believe in him.