

Luke 3

The Mission of John the Baptist

([Isaiah 40:1-5](#); [Matthew 3:1-12](#); [Mark 1:1-8](#); [John 1:19-28](#))

1Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Caesar was King in Rome over all of Roman territories; Pilate a military man was governor over the southern part of Israel, Judaea-Jerusalem, while Herod was tetrarch over Galilee; a fourth part of the Roman possession in the middle east.

Dictionaries - Easton's Bible Dictionary - Tetrarch

Tetrarch [\[N\]](#) [\[H\]](#) [\[S\]](#)

strictly the ruler over the fourth part of a province; but the word denotes a ruler of a province generally ([Matthew 14:1](#) ; [Luke 3:1](#) [Luke 3:19](#) ; [9:7](#) ; [Acts 13:1](#)). Herod and Phasael, the sons of Antipater, were the first tetrarchs in Palestine. Herod the tetrarch had the title of king ([Matthew 14:9](#)).

Herod was actually known as Antipas or properly (Antipater) a devious and treacherous man who was a son of Herod the Great.

Picking up again at the end of this verse;

“and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,”

Phillip, Herod’s brother also the son of Herod the Great was tetrarch over Ituraea; and was said to be more fair and benevolent than his brother Antipater.

Strong’s Concordance

Phonetic Spelling: (ee-too-rah'-yah)

Definition: Ituraea, a region North of Pal

Usage: Ituraean, an adjective applied to a district also called Trachonitis, about 60 miles east of the Sea of Galilee, and partly inhabited by the nomad tribe called Ituraeans.

Lysanias was the son of Ptolemy and was appointed “**tetrarch of Abilene**” territory northwest of Damascus.

Alexander the Great had as one of his generals Ptolemy, who made himself [pharaoh](#) in 323 BC: [Ptolemy I Soter](#), the first king of the [Ptolemaic Kingdom](#). All male kings of [Hellenistic Egypt](#), until [Egypt](#) became a [Roman province](#) in 30 BC ending the Macedonian family's rule, were also [Ptolemies](#).

The evil that prevailed in so many of these people of antiquity include marriage between brother and sister, killing of fathers and sons, marrying off young daughters for peace; truly a sordid and evil plot of Satan with willing human players.

So that sets the table as to who the Romans were that controlled a large part of the known world at the time. Many of these were in

positions when Christ began His ministry when he was around 30 years old.

Now to set the table for those in authority over the Jews in Jerusalem; at the same time, we will move from the purely factual physical event

2Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

If you were to study the Law God gave Moses, it would immediately jump out at you that there is only one high priest at any given time. Many commentators have attempted to resolve these words, but the Word of God is not clear to us on what is meant. So, we will leave it that way unless you want to know the various approaches by the various commentators?

The essence of the verse is the last part;

“the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

The Holy Spirit had indwelt John while he was still in his mother’s womb.

Luke 1:14 14And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor

strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

The communications that most of us lack with God was established while John was yet in his mother. That communications link is the Holy Spirit and it was in a special way activated for John while he was in his home area of Judah. It is called the wilderness as John had isolated himself in the uninhabited parts to seek God and to grasp what God was going to require of him.

To reset the stage as to who was who at this moment in time;

In verse one of this chapter we found that Tiberias had succeeded Augustus as emperor and continued throughout the time of Christ's life on earth. This event of receiving a Word from God occurred around 16 to 18 years after Tiberias Cesar had taken control of Rome. Likely John was in his late 20s at this time as was Christ Jesus. If you recall John was roughly 9 months older than Jesus and they were 2nd cousins.

Luke will site many prophecies from Isaiah as he weaves the history of both John and Christ together.

3And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

The Word John received would change the world, it was repentance of our individual sins. As a sign of that repentance to the world it was accompanied by Baptism. This would be opposite of their upbringing, knowing what the Law required for forgiveness of sin although it was a temporary forgiveness. What John was breaching was the idea that sins could be forgiven completely.

Have you ever wondered if baptism was created by John? In fact, it was not, it was a legal practice according to the Law God had given Moses. It was required of the Priests in order for them to enter the Temple to carry out their duties although the cleansing of water as it was originally known was a ceremonial washing of hands and feet by the priests in the laver that was situated between the bronze laver and the altar.

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them— to him and his descendants throughout their generations.” Exod 30:17-21

The priests had to maintain a continuous state of ritual cleanliness; archeologists have found many of the homes in

Jerusalem with pools in the basements. These were deep enough to be able to immerse a person or one's self. They had two sets of stairs, one "unclean" in which the person would walk down into the pool, submerge as they crossed the pool then climb out another set of stairs that were "pure" so as they left the pool they were cleansed. This is a quote from "One for Israel" an educational site about the messianic-perspective of Israel.

<https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/messianic-perspective/was-baptism-originally-jewish/>

"Following the upheaval of the 1967 war, archaeologists were presented with the opportunity to excavate parts of the upper city of Jerusalem, giving a new window into daily life in ancient times. Many of the houses were grand and spacious, with their own water cisterns and ritual baths in the basements.[2] Some houses were found to have had several of these mikva'ot, since it is thought that as well as providing for the household (which could even be up to fifty people) they would have been able to welcome and host pilgrims arriving for the Jewish feasts, catering for many more. Many of this upper city aristocracy were among the priestly class, who would have to stay in a state of ritual purity as much as possible, and so would have to immerse themselves in a mikveh frequently. Archaeologists also believe that the pools of Siloam and Bethsaida could have been used for ritual bathing in the Second Temple period for those visiting Jerusalem for the high holy days.

So immersion in a mikveh was quite common at the time of Yeshua, but the New Testament also describes baptisms taking place not only in rivers, but in any available body of water. In Acts

8, we read of a visiting pilgrim from Ethiopia, who came to believe in Yeshua as he read Isaiah on the way home:"

John had isolated himself in the wilderness of Judah and when he appeared it was in the area of Jordan. The Jordan river ran through this part of the wilderness, so John began to preach repentance and baptism to those passing by. It soon was broadcast that a man called John the Baptist was doing this.

4As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth;

6And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

This is a quote from Isaiah 40:3, but let's take a look at couple verses before and after it.

Isaiah 40:1 1Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

3The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

And what was this glory of the Lord? was it John? no it was the Messiah the Christos, Jesus Christ the Lord who is and was and is to come.

John was given a task that was prophesied by Isaiah some 700 years prior to his birth. John was the type of committed Christian that we should all be. His commitment was totally focused on one thing, Jesus the Messiah.

7Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matthew 3:7 is more specific about who John was directing this statement;

Matthew 3:7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

To John and to us baptism is not a thing to do on its own, it is an act of obedience that reflects something that has happened to us.

When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior our hearts are circumcised, we become a new creature in Christ we are cleansed by His Blood. Baptism is a symbol of what happened to us, it does not bring it about, it simply reflects as an outward sign an inward cleansing.

It is as if we were buried with Christ by going under the water, and then rising again in new birth coming up out of the water, simulating Christ rising from the dead. We were dead in our sins and through Christ's death and resurrection we are born again into new life. That is the physical act of baptism that represents a spiritual connection to the world that we have with our Savior Jesus Christ.

So, when John specified the religious leaders of the day, he knew their hearts, many were not accepting even the notion that they were sinners dying in their sin, they were religious leaders, above the common man and devout to their religion. John would not have any of that, when John baptized it was with a knowledge that the person had truly repented of their sins, not with their lips but in their heart.

8Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

We saw many times that the Hebrew nation would rely on their ancestry to somehow save them; but in fact, John points out that ancestry is of no value. Even today, just because a father and mother are saved does not mean that the children when they reach the age of accountability are saved. This is a further indication that this salvation that John was preaching would reach beyond the Hebrew nation and their ancestral beginnings. It would be an individual Salvation between each human and Jesus Christ.

9And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

These are spiritual statements that John is making but without the Holy Spirit they would be impossible to understand. Christ is the vine and we are the branches, any branch that comes from anything other than the true vine is fruitless in a spiritual sense and is useless. It is to be cut down destroyed; non-believers are of those useless branches and faux vines. The faux vines can be anything that takes your eyes off of Christ; it can be man-made religion and religion comes in all kinds of shapes and colors; denominationalism, environmentalism, sexualism in all its current day forms, communism, socialism, dare I say even Americanism, just about any ism one can conjure up takes the persons eyes off

of the True Vine Jesus Christ. Anything that you would put in the place of Christ regardless of how great it sounds is blasphemous and is of the devil.

1 John 4:2

By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, :3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and is already in the world at this time.

Do not be deceived by lying spirits that you have found a better, more pure way to love people. If it is not Christ centered it is a lie.

10And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

John's mission which entwined with Jesus Ministry was to show people that they should put others ahead of themselves. We as Christians are to do this; husbands put our wives before ourselves, wives put your husbands before yourselves, fathers put your children before ourselves and so on it goes, we as individuals are to be last in our relationships. This relationship can only be right if we do this one thing before all the others; put God first in our lives; Jesus before ourselves.

12Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

John just gave Godly advice to the common man and now comes to him the government (these were the tax collectors) likely Hebrews and others who serve in the government and they ask the same question. John speaks to the power they have as government officials; they still needed to do all that he told the common man; “put others before themselves”, but they as government officials we are told they have extraordinary power and responsibility. They are to limit their power through processes that the people agree to. They are to only, as with the tax collectors, take from the common man that which has been agreed to by the people and the government and not a penny more without the people’s agreement. I know it sounds like a political statement and likely it is but is what John through the Power of the Holy Spirit addressed when the government employee asked him a question and I believe that is the spirit of what John responded.

14And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.

Even more power and responsibility are laid upon the military of any country. They have the use of weapons and large contingent of men and equipment at their disposal to protect a nation or crush it. Unauthorized violence is the first on the list to things they should take care in their responsibility. They too are obligated to all that John told the common man but due to their positions of power there were additional things. Additionally, they were to walk in truth as all men are but they are to take double care in how they report what they see and hear and finally to be content with their wages. Military have historically been low paying jobs, due mainly to the fact that all of their physical needs are taken care of by the military, so their pay was lower, but they were to be in need of nothing.

15And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

Due to his boldness and apparent touching the hearts of men and women they naturally wondered if John was not the Christ?

16John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Herein lies the nugget that has caused men to stumble and even lengthy discussions within our own Bible Study. John addresses

the issue of baptism by water as opposed to baptism by the Holy Spirit. The two are not the same, one is done with the flesh as a sign the other is done with the Heart. One is done out of obedience to God's Word the other is done out of God's Love, Mercy and Grace to us, for us and in us.

If you were dying and did not have time to be baptized with water and God was offering you a Baptism by the Holy Spirit which would you rather have? For me I'd take hundred times over the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is not to say that we should not all be humble and obedient in our ability to receive water baptism, why would we not agree to that, it is what Jesus asks of us as an outward sign to the world that we are His and His alone. So if it is in your power, please be baptized.

17Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

A fan of some sort was used on the threshing floor to blow away the chaff from the valuable wheat once it was crushed from its shell. John says that Christ has in His hand a fan that will thoroughly purge His floor. The meaning is obvious, it is not a fan but a knowledge of each person as to whether or not they will accept the Free Gift of Salvation. Jesus knows the hearts of all men and those who refuse will be purged from the "floor" or in

other words His eternal Kingdom. The chaff will burn in Hell for eternity.

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18And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. 19But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

Herod took his bother Philips wife Herodias and made her his own wife in violation of all that was honorable. When John repeatedly called Herod out on his adultery it irritated Herod. Herod had John placed in prison where John would eventually be beheaded as a favor to Herodias's daughter. That all comes later.

The Baptism of Jesus

(Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; John 1:29-34)

21Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

Luke not being present for any of these events in some ways shortens the event and does not report many minute details that the other gospels report. For example, John gives a more detailed report as to Jesus even approaching Jordan River where John was preaching and Baptising;

John 1: [29](#)The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. [30](#)This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: **for he was before me. [31](#)And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.**

A specific point of order here; we know that John was 9 months older than Jesus as they were second cousins. How could John say that Jesus, “was before me”?

God had revealed to John through the Holy Spirit that Jesus was in fact the Incarnate God, and had been in existence forever with God and so to say that Jesus was before me is without question accurate.

[22](#)And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

This would be the first physical evidence that the Holy Spirit exists and descended from above to give those in attendance a visual representation of that fact. I have little doubt that the Holy Spirit had been within Christ from the beginning and while He was yet in Mary’s womb, but the world needed a physical representation of that fact and so God chose a dove to carry out that mission in the site of those present.

God declared for all those in attendance to things that would and should set the world on fire; First this was His Son and second God is well pleased with His Son. That word “pleased” is

Transliteration: eudokeó

Phonetic Spelling: (yoo-dok-eh'-o)

Definition: to think well of, to be well-pleased

Usage: I am well-pleased, think it good, am resolved.

The Genealogy of Jesus

[\(Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:1-17\)](#)

23And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son of Heli,*

Did you ever wonder why Jesus did not start His ministry until He was 30 years old? It is covered in the Law as to the age of a man to become a priest;

Numbers 4:23 From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

God knows the Law that He gave to Moses and He would not nor would He have His Son violate the existing Law, so Christ was to be the High Priest, He will be King and Priest according to God so He would of course fulfill the Law as written.

What is to follow we will not pursue in great detail as it is not without controversy. The gospels differ on some minor points but there is a point that needs to be highlighted. Matthew's rendition of the lineage of Christ focuses on the chosen race, where Luke focuses on the Human Race. Jesus in Luke not only reveals that Jesus is the savior of the Chosen Race, the Hebrews, but also the Savior of the Human Race.

Isaiah 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The way Luke proceeded addressed and filled in the lineage of Christ not only to Jacob but to Adam.

24Which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Janna, which was *the son* of Joseph, **25Which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Amos, which was *the son* of Naum, which was *the son* of Esli, which was *the son* of Nagge, **26Which was *the son* of Maath, which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Semei, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Juda, **27Which was *the son* of Joanna, which was *the son* of Rhesa, which was *the son* of Zorobabel, which was *the son* of Salathiel, which was *the son* of Neri, **28Which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Addi, which was *the son* of Cosam, which was *the son* of Elmodam, which was *the son* of Er, **29Which was *the son* of Jose, which was *the son* of Eliezer, which was**********

the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, [30](#)Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, [31](#)Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, [32](#)Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, [33](#)Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, [34](#)Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, [35](#)Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, [36](#)Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, [37](#)Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, [38](#)Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Luke gives Mary's lineage all the way back to Adam and Matthew gives Joseph's lineage