

Expectation

a. The Forerunner turns up the heat! (3:1-20)

3:1,2 An excellent example of Luke's exactitude with historical detail (1:1-4; 2:1,2; Acts 18:12)

[1] [3:1] Luke begins with an elaborate dating, set, not at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, but at the beginning of that of John. It thus reflects the critical importance of the revival of prophecy. And it sets what follows firmly in the context of secular history. **Leon Morris** Luke p.93

[2] [3:1,2] The intention of Luke in describing the dismemberment of the Holy Land at this period, is to make palpable the political dissolution into which the theocracy had fallen at the time when He appeared who was to establish it in its true form, by separating the eternal kingdom from its temporary covering. **Frederic L. Godet** Luke p.108

[3] [3:1-6] Let us notice, first, in this passage, *the wickedness of the times when Christ's Gospel was brought into the world*. The opening verses of the chapter tell us the names of some who were rulers and governors in the earth, when the ministry of John the Baptist began. It is a melancholy list, and full of instruction. There is hardly a name in it which is not infamous for wickedness, Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and his brother, and Annas, and Caiaphas, were men of whom we know little or nothing but evil. The earth seemed given into the hands of the wicked. (Job 9:24). ... Let us beware of slacking our hands from any work of God, because of the wickedness of the times, or the number and power of our adversaries. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." (Eccles. 11:4.) **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol.1 p.84

[4] [3:1-20] Now, under these conditions, the word of the Lord came. Where did it alight? Not in Rome, sitting in her proud insolence upon her seven hills; not in Jerusalem, sitting amid the spiritual and moral ruin that characterized the age, the appalling disaster of the rebellious people of God. The word of God passed the emperor, passed the governor, passed the tetrarchs, passed the priests, and lighted upon a man, a man prepared of God; lighted upon him in the wilderness. To me there is great significance in that. There is suggestiveness even in the

geographical statement. Where will the word of God find a place? Where can it find vantage ground? Not in Rome. We hardly expected it would there. Not in Jerusalem. We might have

expected it there. It went outside everything, to the tract of country geographically a symbol of the world's spiritual and moral condition at that time, the wilderness. Nineteen hundred years have gone and more; and now we know that the most important event in the world's history at that moment was the coming of the word of God to that man. When it happened, it did not create a ripple on the surface of things apparently. As he went on with his mighty work, it created more than a ripple in that neighbourhood; but do you suppose for a moment that in imperial Rome they knew anything about it. The world went on its own blind way in rebellion. **G. Campbell Morgan** Luke p. 48



Tiberius Caesar

Ryle on Luke 3 political roster ... "hardly a name in it which is not infamous for wickedness"

3:3-6 Where does Luke find the ministry of John? (Isaiah 40:3-5)

[5] [3:3] Baptism was a rite of cleansing in a number of religions. It seems certain that at this time the Jews used proselyte baptism. They regarded all Gentiles as unclean, so baptized them when they became proselytes (as well as circumcising the males). The sting in John's practice was that he applied to Jews the ceremony regarded as suitable for unclean Gentiles. Many Jews expected that in the judgment God would deal hardly with Gentile sinners, but that the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God, would be safe.

John denounces this attitude and removes the fancied security. **Leon Morris** Luke p.95

[6] [3:6] That "the salvation of God" is to be made known to the whole human race is the main theme of his Gospel. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p. 88

3:7-9 Is the Spirit of God 'soft with the saints'? (Rev.11:5)

[7] [3:7-17] The complement [*metanoios*], of *repentance*, indicates

Oh for the outspokenness – and righteous example – of John the Baptist!

[8] [3:7-14] Well would it be for the Church of Christ, if it possessed more plain-speaking ministers, like John the Baptist, in these latter days. A morbid dislike to strong language, an excessive fear of giving offence, a constant flinching from directness and plain speaking, are unhappily, too much the characteristics of the modern Christian pulpit. Personality and uncharitable language are no doubt always to be deprecated. But

there is no charity in flattering unconverted people, by abstaining from any mention of their vices, or in applying smooth epithets to damnable sins. There are two texts which are too much forgotten by Christian preachers. In one it is written, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." In the other it is written, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Luke 6:26; Gal. 1:10.) **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol.1 p.89

the moral act which was to accompany the outward rite, and which gave it its value. This term indicates a complete change of mind. **Frederic L. Godet** *Luke* p. 110

[9] [3:8-11] There is a play upon words between "children" (*banim*) and "stones" (*abanim*). It was God who made Abraham to be the rock whence the Jews were hewn (Is. 51:1,2); and out of the most unpromising material He can make genuine children of Abraham. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 90

3:10-14 Where is the emphasis in John's preaching of repentance? (Isaiah 58:6-9)

[10] [3:12] For a Jew to enter such a service was the most utter degradation. He was excommunicated, and his whole family was regarded as disgraced. But the Romans allowed Herod to retain some powers of taxation; and therefore not all tax-collectors in Palestine were in the service of Rome. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 91

[11] Let it be carefully noted that John the Baptist says not a word to shew [show] that the work of the tax-gatherer or the soldier is unlawful in the sight of God. **J. C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.1 p.94

Are we faithful in imitating John?
In exhorting? In proclaiming? In
reproving? And is our reproof
aimed at the same audience as
John's reproof?

3:15-20 When Messiah arrives, will HIS gospel be 'soft on the saints'? (Malachi 3:1-5; 4:1-3)

[12] [3:15] Their thinking this possible, although "John did no sign," and had none of the insignia of royalty, not even descent from David, is remarkable. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 93

[13] [3:16] Palestinian teachers were not paid, but pupils used to show their appreciation with a variety of services. A rabbinic saying (in its present form dated c. 250 but probably much older) runs, 'Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher except the loosing of his sandal-thong' (SB, i, p.121). Untying the sandal-thong was just too much. But John selects precisely this duty, which the rabbis regarded as too menial for a disciple, as that for which he was unworthy. This is genuine humility. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.97

[14] [3:16] The passage is one of many, the exact meaning of which must remain doubtful; but the purifying of the believer rather than the punishment of the unbeliever seems to be intended. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 95

[15] [3:15-17] Whoever refuses to be baptized with the fire of holiness, will be exposed to the fire of wrath. **F. Godet** *Luke* p. 115

[16] [3:18] These words give the three chief functions of the Baptist: to exhort all, to preach good tidings to the penitent, to reprove the impenitent. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 96

[17] [3:20] Josephus, in the famous passage which confirms and supplements the Gospel narrative respecting the Baptist (*Ant. 18 5:2*), says that Antipas put him in prison because of his immense influence with the people. They seemed ready to do whatever he told them; and he might tell them to revolt. This may easily have been an additional reason for imprisoning him: it is no contradiction of the Evangelists. What Josephus states is what Antipas publicly alleged as his reason for arresting John: of course he would not give his private reasons. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 97

b. The Credentials of the Messiah (3:21-38)

3:21,22 What equation is made by the event of Jesus' baptism? (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 61:1-3)

[18] [3:22] The descent of the Spirit was not, as some Gnostics taught, the moment of the Incarnation: it made no change in the nature of Christ. But it may have illuminated Him so as to complete His growing consciousness of His relations to God and to man (2:52). It served two purposes: (1) to make Him known to the Baptist, who thenceforth had Divine authority for making Him known to the world (Jn. 1:32,33); and (2) to mark the official beginning of the ministry, like the anointing of a king. **A. Plummer** *Luke* p. 99

3:23a An easily overlooked detail, but again unique to Luke

3:23b-38 What is the contrast with the genealogy as recorded by Matthew? (Matthew 1:1-16)

[19] [3:23-38] There is further a difference of form between the two genealogies. Matthew comes down, while Luke ascends the stream of generations. Perhaps this difference of method depends on the difference of religious position between the Jews and the Greeks. The Jew, finding the basis of his thought in a revelation, proceeds synthetically from cause to effect; the Greek, possessing nothing beyond the fact, analyzes it, that he may proceed from effect to cause. **Frederic L. Godet** *Luke* p. 126

[20] [3:23-38] Luke's insertion of the genealogy at this point, after the baptism that marked Him out as Son of God and before the temptation which helped define the nature of His Messianic task, may be meant to help us see something of Jesus' Messianic significance. That the genealogy is recorded at all shows Him to be a real man, not a demi-god like those in Greek and Roman

Jesus baptized? Do we identify with the sins of our church, nation?

[21] In presenting Himself for baptism Jesus had to make, as others did, ... His confession of sins. Of what sins, if not of those of His people and of the world in general? He placed before John a striking picture of them, not with that pride and scorn with which the Jews spoke of the sins of the heathen, and the Pharisees of the sins of the publicans, but with the humble and compassionate

tones of an Isaiah (chap. 63), a Daniel (chap. 9), or a Nehemiah (chap. 9), when they confessed the miseries of their people, as if the burden were their own. He could not have gone down into the water after such an act of communion with our misery, unless resolved to give Himself up entirely to the work of putting an end to the reign of sin. **Frederic L. Godet** *Luke* p. 121

mythology. That it goes back to David points to an essential element in His Messianic qualifications. That it goes back to Adam brings out His kinship not only with Israel but with the whole human race. That it goes back to God relates Him to the Creator of all. He was the Son of God. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.101

[22] [3:23-38] Perhaps, if we bear in mind the obscurity in which, to the Greeks, the origin of mankind was hidden, and the absurd fables current among them about *autochthonic* nations, we shall see how interesting any document would be to them, which, following the track of actual names, went back to the first father of the race. Luke's intention would thus be very nearly the same as Paul's when he said at Athens (Acts 17:26), "God hath made of one blood the whole human race" **F. Godet** *Luke* p. 126