



Study 3 - Luke 3: 1 - 18 Heralding the Messiah

Luke continues with his careful introduction to Jesus' ministry. He tells us all about John because John came before, and announced, Jesus. One thing he is going to make very clear throughout his book is that while John was a prophet Jesus was more than a prophet.

First we read Luke 3: 1-9

Luke in 3: 4 – 6 uses Isaiah's great picture of hope in Isaiah 40: 3 – 5, which prophesies the return of the Lord and his people to Jerusalem after the exile, as a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus to the people of God. John is the voice. Jesus is the Lord.

An obvious first question to make you think, although it does not come directly from this passage is this:

What is your hope? How far does your hope change the way you live from day to day? Where should our hope be placed?

Pause.

Obviously the first part of that question has an individual answer, not an only right one. Our hope should be placed on being with Jesus in his heavenly kingdom and then after our resurrection on being part of his kingdom when heaven and earth meet to form the new heaven and new earth that is our ultimate destination.

Second question: the basic message that John preached was 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. How does this compare with the messages you hear preached these days? Are the differences only because John was preaching before the life and death of Jesus and the preaching you hear is from long after? Or are there differences there ought not to be?

Pause.

Again the answer to that question depends on your situation.

The last verse we read: 'the axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.' Is harsh.

Third question: in what ways can we see that happening in our day and in our society?

Pause.

Yet another question where the answer depends on who we are and where we are. When you look at the world today and see what a mess it is in because of men's greed and lust for power it hasn't improved much since John's day.

That is the end of part 3A. Go to file 3B to continue.

Read Luke 3: 10 – 18

When the people asked him how they were to live to show they had truly repented John gave them 4 practical examples in this passage. Two ways they were to look after the poor: giving them clothes and food. Two ways they were not to be corrupt and to be good and honest in all things: the examples of the tax collectors and the soldiers.

Fourth question: if he had been talking to us what examples would he have given? Were his examples, particularly the first two, really practical? (It would not be long before they ran out of spare clothes and food.) How realistic are the examples you think he might have given to you? How well can we follow these examples when we have to live in the real world we find ourselves in?

Pause.

Yet again the answers will all depend on who and where you are.

John talked about 3 things: a prophetic warning of coming judgement (flee from the wrath to come... the axe at the root of the trees ...); calling for justice and compassion in our dealings with others (sharing clothes and food ... honesty in all things ...); and a right attitude to the coming Messiah (accepting the baptism of the Holy Spirit).

Question 5: Different churches major on one or other of the present day equivalents of these.' Which do our churches make the most of? On which do we fall short?

Pause.

Like all the questions on this passage we have to ask ourselves how they apply to us. And I cannot tell you what your answers should be!