

I. The Forerunner Runs (Lk. 3:1-20)

A. Just as Luke started his gospel concerning Jesus with the miraculous birth of his forerunner, so too, he starts the portion concerning the ministry of Jesus by first highlighting the ministry of the forerunner. In other words, John's ministry reveals the nature and character of God in a similar fashion as Jesus' ministry and work reveals God to us. All four gospels make sure that we understand that John's story and Jesus' story are inseparable.

1. Timing - (vs 1) From secular historical records we know with certainty the general time this was, but it is difficult to be certain of the exact month and year. Historians agree that this is set anywhere from A.D. 27 to 29. Luke made detailed reference to the time when John began his ministry in order to document the reliability of his Gospel rather than make a spiritual point. (Lk. 1:3-4)
2. Luke listed the political leaders of the region Jesus lived and served in. The historical reality of these rulers is beyond dispute. Archaeologists have discovered specific, undeniable evidence that these people lived and ruled in these places and at these times. Like any good historian, Luke gave a real, historical framework. Luke is giving more than a chronological measure; he also is telling us something of the political climate and culture of the times.
 - a. Tiberius was an emperor known for his cruelty and severity.
 - b. Pontius Pilate was also renowned for his brutal massacres of the Jewish people in Judea, and his insensitivity towards the Jews.
 - c. The rulers from the family of Herod the Great (Herod, Philip, and Lysanias) were known for their corruption and cruelty.
 - d. Caiaphas... Annas: Luke also listed the religious leaders of Judea in the period of Jesus' ministry. Caiaphas was actually the High Priest, but his father-in-law, Annas (the patriarch of the family), was the real influence among the priestly class. Both of these High Priests were known for their political focus and corruption.

B. The Mission of John the Baptist - (vs. 3) The original language suggests that a distinct particular message from God, “word”, was formed in John that he was to deliver. This message was developed in him progressively and in maturity while he was in the wilderness. In other words, God's design was that he spend years being prepared in the mundane and unrecognized aspects of life and then was brought into the spotlight for a short time to deliver the message. Our culture is exactly the opposite of this.

1. Preaching a Baptism of Repentance for Forgiveness of Sins (vs 3) Just as his father Zacharias prophesied, John's message and mission was to make people aware of their sins, that they might repent and be forgiven. John's preaching was specifically geared towards making humanity aware of how truly dark and wicked their hearts and minds are so that they would truly desire to be delivered from their fallen state.

In this way, John's baptism was almost entirely different from the baptism that we practice that identifies us as coming to faith in Jesus. The baptism of John identified someone's confession as confessing their sinful nature and actions and desiring to change.

John's ministry consisted of preparing people by getting them right with God, so that when Messiah appeared, they would believe on Him. - Constable

Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3, as do all the other gospel writers, to identify John's prophetic role. However, only Luke adds Isaiah 40:4-5 to his quote, specifically highlighting the desire of God that “all flesh” would receive salvation.

2. Brood of Vipers - (vs. 7) Farmers often burned the stubble of their fields to get the land ready for the next planting season. As the fires neared the vipers dens, the family of snakes would flee away from the flames. The Jewish culture was highly agricultural and everyone would have understood the word picture John was using. John here was actually validating their desire to get baptized. In today's language it would be something like this.....

“I want you to ask yourself why so many of you are feeling convicted of sin right now. God is showing you your wickedness right now and all of you know that God rightly judges sin. Therefore, this is a kindness from

the Lord and He's revealing your sin to you so that you would repent and turn so He won't have to bring Judgment."

3. Raise up Stones to be Children for Abraham - (vs. 8) John was baptizing in the same geographical place where Joshua led the children of Israel across the Jordan river into the promised land. God commanded Joshua to have the priests gather twelve stones and stack them up as a memorial and to teach their "children" what they mean, to remind them that God in His mercy is the one who delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt. As John looked upon the memorial stones, he reminded the people that Abraham's righteousness could not save them or keep them from judgment. Only with a sincere heart of repentance and a leaning upon God's mercy could you be justified in God's sight. (Josh. 4:1-9)
4. What shall we do? - (vs. 10-14) It is of note that John did not give a blanket definition of practical repentance, but rather spoke to individuals about their own arenas of interpersonal relationship and conduct.

Personal integrity in the ordinary things of your life is still the mark of true repentance. We sometimes think God requires us to do great or impossible things to demonstrate repentance. Often, He instead looks for integrity and humility in our unique situations. - Guzik

- C. The Wrong Expectation - (vs. 15-16) John made such an impact that people logically wondered if he was the Messiah. Instead of cultivating his own popularity and ministry, he pointed everyone to Jesus. The rabbis of Jesus' day taught that a teacher might require just about anything of his followers except to have them take off his sandals. That was considered too humiliating to demand. Yet John said that he was not even worthy to do this for Jesus. (John 3:26-30)
 1. Baptized with Holy Spirit and Fire - John makes this statement primarily to distinguish his ministry and baptism from that of the Messiah. In other words, John confessed that he could only baptize on the outside with water, however the Messiah would baptize you on the inside with the Holy Spirit and with a cleansing fire that burns away the chaff of sin and darkness and makes you clean.
 - a. Fire - There is no place in the entirety of scripture that aligns with the common charismatic expression or understanding that the fire of God being spoken of here speaks of a physical manifestation of

the feeling of burning or heat that can sometimes accompany experiences of God's presence or the Holy Spirit's ministry.

- D. John Imprisoned - (vs. 19-20) Luke wraps up his testimony of John's life by telling us how he was imprisoned, thus ending his public ministry. Most historians and scholars agree that John came powerfully and suddenly upon the scene in 29 AD and was imprisoned sometime between twelve to eighteen months after. He remained in prison for around eighteen to twenty four months before he was murdered.

“Herod feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it in his inclination to raise a rebellion, for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise.” - Josephus

II. The Baptism of Jesus - (Lk. 3:21-22)

- A. Why Baptism for Jesus? - (vs. 21) Jesus did not receive baptism because He was a sinner that needed to repent and be cleansed from His sins. He did it to completely identify Himself with sinful man. This was the same heart that would lead to His ultimate identification with sinful man on the cross. In other words, just as he stood in our place on the cross, he stood in our place at the Jordan river to give his heart fully and completely to God in sincerity.
- Rightly did John tell Jesus that he did not need to be baptized by John for the repentance of sins, but Jesus correctly responded that it was necessary so people could understand how a sinful man being made righteous was going to be fulfilled. (Matt. 3:13-15)
- B. The Love and Voice of the Father - (vs. 22) Other gospel writers describe the Theophany that happened at the baptism of Jesus, but only Luke points out that it happened while He was praying. The three Persons of the Trinity were all manifested at once. The Holy Spirit came in bodily form like a dove. Scripturally, doves represent God's divine peace. The voice of God the Father was heard, and the beloved Son was baptized.

The Father spoke audibly from heaven to declare without a doubt that this was no ordinary person being baptized; rather, Jesus was the Son of God. The Father also made it known how pleasing it was that the divine Son was identifying with sinful man. The Father actually quoted Psalm 2, thus declaring that Jesus was the “Son” being referred to in Psalm 2:6-12 as well as quoting Isaiah 42 declaring that Jesus was also the suffering servant in whom was His delight (Is. 42:1-8).

III. Jesus' Genealogy according to Luke - (Lk. 3:23-38)

A. The Two Genealogies - (Lk. 3:23-38) There are some major differences between the genealogy of Matthew's gospel and the one Luke records. The offering of a genealogy was very important culturally in Luke's day to show the authenticity of inherited status and position. Matthew's genealogy starts with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus whereas Luke's starts with Jesus and moves backwards all the way to Adam.

1. About 30 years of age - (vs 23) In the Jewish culture of that day, a man was considered to be fully mature at age 30 and according to the law of Moses, age 30 was when an individual could enter the Priesthood. (Num. 4:2-3)
2. Different from David to Joseph - Luke differs in the account of Matthew from David onward, but they both end their genealogies with Joseph. The best explanation for this seems to be that Luke followed Mary's line (Jesus' actual lineage) while Matthew followed Joseph's line (His legal lineage by adoption). This was Luke's point in his important phrase, "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph."
3. Adam, the son of God - Luke traced his genealogy all the way back to Adam, to show that Jesus belonged to all mankind, not only to the Jewish people, once again highlighting the universal redemptive mission of Jesus.