

Luke 3:1-20, Preparing Our Hearts Before the Lord

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

1. Luke lists political figures:
 - a. Caesar, Pilate, Herod, High-Priests
 - i. Two High-Priests are mentioned, but only one was ruler. Annas kept his title after being deposed by the Romans and making Caiaphas High Priest.
 - b. Honors & casts them in a favorable light.
 - c. Luke surveys them from the most distant to the more directly involved.
2. John had one mission: to prepare people for the Messiah's (Jesus) arrival.
 - a. **Preached a baptism of repentance:** Israel had drifted so far from God that He needed to raise up John as prophet to wake people up and call them back to repentance.
 - i. Repentance is Central to Luke's Gospel (a) beginning, Luke 3:10-14; and (b) End, Luke 24:44-49)
 - ii. Repent: Gk. "Change of Mind"
3. The Churches Mission is to prepare for the Messiah's arrival (the second coming of Christ thru the preaching of the gospel).
 - a. **We are ambassadors for Christ: 2 Cor. 5:16** *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all people will see God’s salvation.” 7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9 The ax 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.”

1. Compares to preparing a red-carpet reception for a king; Creation is called to level the path so that God can enter in; There’s a call for everyone to prepare for the coming king.

**The Result is all people will see & experience God’s Salvation (JESUS)!

2. We too must prepare our hearts before the Lord daily (see Luke 11:1-2)
 - a. **Valleys → Filled In** (Empty places are filled by His presence)
 - i. Ask Him to Fill you, to strengthen you and meet your needs daily.
 - b. **Mountains → Brought Low** (Pride Must Come Down).
 - i. Examine your heart for any pride that needs to be repented of.
 - c. **Crooked Roads → Made Straight** (Sin Must be Repented of in our lives).
 - i. Examine your heart before the Lord, and repent of known and unknown sins (sins of commission and omission).
 - d. **Rough Ways → Made Smooth** (Love & Kindness should reign supreme).
 - i. Make it a point to walk in love and forgiveness on a daily basis.
3. Preparing our Hearts Before the Lord Will Result In:
 - a. **(1) Experiencing God’s presence.** If you want God to manifest you have to prepare your heart regularly thru examining your heart and repenting when necessary. You have to get right and live right.
 - b. **(2) The Return of the Lord** (Jesus is coming back for a bride without spot, wrinkle, or blemish) A prophetic voice cries out in the land (the Church): “Jesus is coming soon→Get Your House and Lives in Order.”
4. Prophetic warning to Produce Fruit in keeping with repentance.
 - a. They thought they were guaranteed Abraham’s Blessing, no matter how they acted. (e.g., False teaching of “once saved, always saved”).

10 “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. 11 John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” 13 “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them. 14 Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do? He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

1. Matters of the Heart:

- a. V.11 – Don’t Be Selfish (Share what you have with those in need around you).
- b. V.12 – The Romans gathered funds for their government by farming out the collection of taxes. Tax collectors were known to add a percentage to it and keep it for themselves. They were told to act right. To do that would mean to deal honestly with people.
- c. V.13 Soldiers were told to not extort money, but to act honestly.

**These are matters of the heart, and each day we are confronted to do the same. We are challenged daily to live right. Sometimes we think it’s the big things that matter most, but God is interested in the small things as much as He is in the big things.

For instance:

- Telling small so-called white lies.
- Not being kind to people (e.g., your spouse, those closest to you).
- Looking at someone lustfully.
- Being selfish in traffic.
- Eating more than you should.
- Gossiping/Talking about other people.
- Neglecting your devotional time.
- Can you think of any areas to add to this: _____?

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. 19 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

1. V.15 The OT Prophets preached the coming of the Messiah and they were wondering if John might be Him.

a. John correctly pointed to Jesus as the Messiah:

- i. John did not take the attention and make it about Himself. He had to decrease so Jesus could increase (He had to step aside so Jesus could fulfill His Mission)
- ii. John's mission was "to baptize people with water."
- iii. John spoke of what Jesus would do: baptize with the **Holy Spirit & fire (consecration, empowerment, presence, and judgment)**.
- iv. Eight Types of Fires in Scripture: Fire of Holy Spirit; Fire of the Love of God (the Cross); Fire of God's Word; Fire of Holiness; Fire of Worship & Prayer; Fire of Impurity; Fire of Hell; Fire of Ministry (Chuck Pierce, *Rekindle the Altar*).

b. There are 44 Prophecies that Jesus Fulfilled (see notes).

2. V.17 His Winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor:

- a. Winnowing: Tossing harvest grain into the air by way of allowing the wind to separate the wheat from the chaff. The heavier grain would separate from the lighter chaff. Chaff was useless for consumption and normally burned (Jer. 15:7)
- b. A time is coming when God will separate the wicked from the righteous. Things will not always go on as they are. The unrepentant are storing up God's wrath for the day of Judgment.



3. V.20 John was locked up in prison for speaking the truth into Herod's life.

- a. Sometimes the truth will cost you: Doing the right thing can sometimes get us in trouble. But remember, we must answer to God, not people. Are you willing to do what's right regardless of the cost? Or will you compromise?