

Luke's Gospel: Chapter 3

John the Baptist and Jesus...

John the Baptist prepares the way (Luke 3 v 1 to 20)

“Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias...” (v 1) – Luke lists the historical political leaders of Judea, the region where Jesus ministered: Tiberius was an emperor known for his severity; Pontius Pilate was renowned for his brutal massacres of the Jewish people in Judea; the rulers from the family of Herod the Great (Herod Antipas, Philip, Lysanias) were known for their cruelty: together they represented the moral degradation of the Roman Empire, especially in provinces like Judea. Luke also lists the corrupt religious leaders: Caiaphas was actually the high priest, but his father-in-law Annas (the patriarch of the family) was the real power behind the high priesthood. Matthew, Mark and Luke identify John with ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness’ prophesied by Isaiah (40 v 3 to 5), and in John’s gospel John the Baptist identifies himself as that voice (John 1 v 23).

- Matthew (3 v 7) tells us that the ‘crowds’ in v 7 were the Pharisees and Sadducees. What provoked John to express his disapproval of them in such strong terms, calling them a “brood of vipers” (v 7)? How does this link with Jesus’ rebuke in John 8 v 44? What should be the results of repentance: (i) for the Pharisees and Sadducees (v 8); (ii) the crowds (v 11); for the tax collectors (v 13); and (iv) for the soldiers (v 14)?

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (v 16) – John says that the Messiah is coming with a different ‘baptism. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was promised as part of the New Covenant. This was often experienced as people were prayed for, with hands laid on them (see Acts 6 v 6; 8 v 17; 9 v 17; 13 v 3, 4; 19 v 6).

The baptism of Jesus (Luke 3 v 21, 22)

- The people were encouraged to be baptised for the forgiveness of their sins (v 3). But why did Jesus need to be baptised? See 2 Corinthians 5 v 21.

Notice Luke’s emphasis on prayer (v 21). The three persons of the Trinity are all manifested here. The Holy Spirit came in bodily form like a dove. The voice of God the Father was heard, and the beloved Son was baptized. The voice from heaven left no doubt: this was the sinless Son of God, pleasing the Father by his identification with sinful man. Jesus began his ministry with the blessing of the Father and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit...

The genealogy of Jesus Christ (Luke 2 v 41 to 52) and the curse on Jechoniah

“Being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli...” (v 23) – in the Greek, ‘as was supposed’ translates the phrase *ὡς ἐνομίζετο* (*hos enomizeto*), which comes from the root word νόμος (*nomos*), meaning ‘law’ or ‘custom’. The phrase thus has a legal connotation, and suggests that Jesus was ‘legally’ (but not actually, or physically) the son of Joseph – an allusion to the virgin birth prophesied in Isaiah 7 v 14. God had announced that his plan for the redemption of mankind would involve the Messiah being brought forth from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49 v 10), and specifically from the line of David (Ruth 4 v 18 to 22; 2 Samuel 7 v 11 to 16). But the succession of subsequent kings proved to be, with a few exceptions, a disastrous line. As the succeeding kings of Judah went from bad to worse, we eventually encounter Jechoniah (also known as Coniah and Jehoiachin), upon whom God pronounces a ‘blood curse’ (see Jeremiah 22 v 24, 25, 30). What makes this so remarkable is that the Messiah was prophesied to come from the royal line of David, and now there was a blood curse on that very royal line!

The New Testament presents two genealogies of Jesus. As a Jew focusing on Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew (1 v 1 to 17) begins his genealogy with Abraham, and follows the royal line through David and Solomon, the first surviving son of Bathsheba, and on to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. But Luke, as a doctor focusing on Jesus as the Son of Man, takes his genealogy from Adam, the first man. Then from Abraham to David the two genealogies are identical. However, when Luke gets to David, he ‘sidesteps’ the cursed line, and rather than going through Solomon, follows the line from Nathan, the second surviving son of Bathsheba, and takes his genealogy directly through to Mary, identifying Joseph as the son-in-law of Heli, Mary’s father. The virgin birth thus has the effect of ‘bypassing’ the blood curse on the descendants of Jechoniah. See the chart of the two genealogies overleaf...

The two genealogies of Jesus Christ

Luke	Matthew & Luke	Matthew	Luke
<i>Adam</i>		<i>Solomon</i>	<i>Nathan</i>
Seth		Rehoboam	Mattatha
Enos		Abijah	Menna
Cainan		Asaph	Melea
Mahalaleel		Jehoshaphat	Eliakim
Jared		Joram	Jonam
Enoch		(Ahaziah)	Joseph
Methuselah		(Joash)	Judah
Lamech		(Amaziah)	Simeon
Noah		Uzziah	Levi
Shem		Jotham	Matthat
Arphaxad		Ahaz	Jorim
Cainan		Hezekiah	Eliezer
Shelah		Manasseh	Joshua
Eber		Amos	Er
Peleg		Josiah	Elmadam
Reu		Jehoiakim	Cosam
Serug		Jehoiachin (<i>Jechoniah</i>)	Addi
Nahor		Shealtiel	Melchi
Terah		Zerubbabel	Neri
	<i>Abraham</i>	Abiud	Shealtiel
	Isaac	Eliakim	Zerubbabel
	Jacob	Azor	Rhesa
	Judah	Zadok	Joanan
	Perez	Achim	Joda
	Hezron	Eliud	Josech
	Ram (Admin, Arni)	Eleazar	Semein
	Amminadab	Matthan	Matthathias
	Nahshon	Jacob	Maath
	Salmon (Sala)	<i>Joseph</i>	Nagge
	Boaz		Esli
	Obed		Naum
	Jesse		Amos
	<i>David</i>		Mattathias
			Joseph
			Janna
			Melchi
			Levi
			Matthat
			Heli
			(<i>Mary</i>)