

Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel ... Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #05

Passage: Luke 3:1-20

Sermon Date: Oct 16, 2005

Introduction:

Jesus and John the Baptist are adults now, and John's role is made very clear as he calls people in the lands along the Jordan River to repent (turn from their sins) and be baptized. His call is to us today as well – we too need to prepare ourselves, and be prepared, for Christ to enter and influence our lives more fully.

Bible Study:

1. Begin at the end this week – by thinking first about an application. Take some time before you start this study to reflect on the following statements and complete one or two of them for yourself.

One aspect of my spiritual life I'd like to strengthen is ...

A Christian character quality I'd like to further develop is ...

An area of sin in my life I should be addressing more is ...

Pray: Ask God to use this study time to help you grow in the areas you've identified above.

This bible study was developed by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. To hear a sermon on the same scripture passage covered in this bible study, come to one of our Sunday worship services (8:30am or 11:00am) on the date listed on page 1. Or after that date you can hear it by logging on to www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/

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2. Now read this week's bible passage and make observations about it. While doing this, continue to practice the skill you worked on in the previous lesson – asking questions.

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>¹In 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—²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. ³He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:</p> <p>"A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. ⁵Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. ⁶And all mankind will see God's salvation.' "</p> <p>⁷John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce 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. ⁹The 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." ¹⁰"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.</p>	

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>¹¹John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."</p> <p>¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"</p> <p>¹³"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told</p> <p>them. ¹⁴Then 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."</p> <p>¹⁵The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷His 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." ¹⁸And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.</p> <p>¹⁹But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, ²⁰Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.</p>	

3. Next, use this chart to **interpret some key observations**.

a. Select a few of your observations & questions from pages 2-3 that you find most interesting or important. Rewrite these below, and interpret and apply them using the columns to the right.

b. For each observation, begin to interpret by asking yourself these kinds of questions:

- What does it mean?
- Why is this important?
- What does this tell me about the Father? Jesus? The Holy Spirit?
- Are there other scriptures that could help me understand this?

Observation What does it say?	Interpretation What does it mean?

Don't forget to look for cross-references that can help you interpret more accurately & biblically

4. Now consider how you can **apply** the Word to your life. Look for:

- **Sins** you need to avoid
- **Promises** you want to believe
- **Examples** you'd like to follow (remember "SPECK")
- **Commands** you'll try harder to obey
- **Knowledge** you'd like to share

Don't just write things to write them – listen carefully to God's Word and what he seems to be teaching you, and look for relevant things that you're truly stirred to do. Then as you do them, God will help you learn, grow, and help others grow.

Application How do I apply what it means?

Beware of Complacency

5. Luke 3:8 sounds like John was confronting complacency among the Jews. Luke warns them not to say “We have Abraham as our father” or in other words “we’re good to go, we don’t need any help, everything’s just fine.” The complacently unfruitful risk having an unpleasant encounter with the axe that is already at the root of the tree.
- Compare Luke 3:9 with John 15:1-8. How does the latter passage help you understand Luke’s point better?
 - Now compare Luke 3:17 with Matthew 13:24-30. Again, how does the latter passage help you understand what Luke is saying to us?
 - Do you think Christians today have significant complacency problem? Luke’s hearers were inclined to say “We have Abraham as our father” rather than producing fruit by repenting. What analogous attitudes keep Christians from taking repentance seriously or diligently working to bear the “fruit” (*i.e.* make disciples) that we were intended to produce in our lives?
 - Is complacency an issue for you? (Before you answer “No” too quickly, consider how significantly you are growing more Christ-like and how much you are advancing the gospel and making disciples.) If it’s an issue, what might you do to repent in this area?

If you’d like to explore this further, check out Hebrews 5:11– 6:12 for a similar warning against complacency and falling away.

John as the “Forerunner” of Christ

6. A “forerunner” was one who went ahead of a king to clear the path of any obstacles (branches, rocks, etc.) and thus prepare the way for the king to pass through.
- How was John the Baptist’s role similar to that of a forerunner? (Helpful cross-references: Matthew 11:10; Luke 1:17, 1:76-77).
 - Consider Luke 7:29-30: *“All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, **because they had been baptized by John.** But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, **because they had not been baptized by John.**”* How important and effective was John’s role?
 - Do you think we still need a forerunner today? Why or why not?

Author’s Note: In preparing question #6, I first thought of applying the idea of being a forerunner to our own lives – “Are we ‘forerunners’ who pave the way for Christ to enter others’ lives?” Fortunately, our editors helped me see this is as a flawed interpretation of this passage. Here are two principles of interpretation I learned as a result of this error:

- ⇒ When studying the Gospels, it is important to **view them in light of the overarching story they are telling of the arrival of the kingdom of God.** In this case, this means recognizing John the Baptist’s unique role as prophetic announcer.
- ⇒ Meanwhile, we must also **guard against trying to personalize every passage of scripture** – every part is not necessarily directly applicable (for instance, children dare not interpret Christ’s staying behind at the temple at age twelve as a license for staying behind whenever they want to). So in this case, we must be careful not to personalize John’s role as forerunner – he is the one and only “voice of one calling in the desert.”

Further study led me to Hebrews 6:20 which, in the NASB translation, calls Christ a “forerunner for us”, and then John 14:2 where Christ says “I go to prepare a place for you.” So Christ is our forerunner!

Application: Repent

7. In Luke 3:11-14, John identifies some specific sins to be avoided by those who were coming to him for baptism. When we see a rebuke in scripture, it is constructive to take that opportunity to let God speak to our heart – perhaps about that same area of sin, or perhaps about some other area where we are displeasing him.

a. If someone just like you had approached John at that same moment, what do you imagine he might have challenged them/you to do (or stop doing)? Perhaps something you thought of in Question 1 or Question 4?

b. What are some specific steps you could take to apply something you've discovered during this bible study?

c. Who could you allow to help you with this application? How?