



**CAPITOL[®]
COMMISSION**

Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders



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“And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”” Luke 3:22

Luke 3:15-38 - Who is this Jesus?

At long last, we approach the public ministry of Jesus. Luke has furnished incredible details about His early life which the other gospel writers did not, as well as background on John, the King’s herald. In verses 15-20, John’s narrative continues with the question whether this Old Testament-style prophet is the Christ (the anointed one, or *Messiah* in Hebrew), an anticipated prophet promised from Moses’ time (Deuteronomy 18:18). John’s response indicates he firmly understood his role, baptizing with water versus the baptism coming “with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Given he had the Holy Spirit from before birth (1:15), John understands; there is no competition between he and Jesus.

John’s message continues to be filled with fierce warnings about a great separation coming to divide the wheat from the chaff, with very different destinations. To be useful as a grain and brought into the master’s barn or to be useless and headed into a burning fire is strong and emphatic imagery. This may sound stark, but do not miss the description of what John brought in verse 18: Good news. A preaching of hellfire and damnation may not sound like good news to our ears but if you were unaware of danger and someone brings its imminent threat to you with a way to escape it, you would also process that information as very good news, too! This is the case with God’s kingdom.

Luke’s account then tells us where John’s path leads—to prison. His offense is calling out Herod the tetrach for taking his brother’s wife. This must have been common knowledge and a sin not acknowledged by the two high priests we learned of last time. Speaking truth to power can have consequences, but John’s conscience is clear because he taught the same message to the king that he gave to the masses. And he pulled no punches.

Read verses 21-22 for Luke’s account of Jesus’ baptism which is in all three synoptic gospels (not in the Apostle John’s). The significance of Jesus’ baptism is huge. Recall even ordering Jews to be baptized was a call usually for Gentiles wishing to convert to Judaism. He basically was telling the Jews they were too unclean for their Messiah’s

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastor-missionaries who in session teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for all those in our state capitols. The Bible studies are hand distributed to each legislative office, are available online at capitolcom.org, and shared across the Capitol Commission community. This ministry is an extension of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message and help believers mature through Biblical expositional instruction. Prayer is foundational to this ministry, consistent with proper submission to governmental authority (Rom 13:1-7) and obedient to the command to pray for our appointed leaders (1 Tim 2:1-4).

Our desire is to witness God’s work in transforming hearts.

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presence. Why, then is the perfect God/Man, the Messiah, doing this? Even John was a bit bothered by it in Matthew 3:14, as John thought he should be baptized by Christ, not the other way around. Jesus' response to him there is to "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matt 3:15). What does that mean, to fulfill all righteousness? It means to obey the law of God fully. Jesus identifies with His people by entering into the requirements of God's law with them, including this baptism rite. As Dr. R.C. Sproul notes, "His active obedience was His whole life of obeying the law of God, whereby He *qualified to be the Savior*. It was by His perfect obedience that He became the Lamb without blemish."¹ (emphasis mine). In other words, Jesus' cross helps us to be sinless, but His life allows us to have His righteousness imputed (or credited) to us.

What happens next is a divine ordination of the Holy Spirit, descending like a dove, upon Jesus, and a voice from heaven. We are told in John 1:33 that God had informed John that this would be the identification for him to recognize the Messiah and it reveals Him to Israel. It also serves to anoint Jesus as the Messiah, a reference fulfilling Isaiah 61, which will be important in Luke 4. The proclamation by God the Father portrays the persons of the Trinity and identifies Jesus as His beloved Son, and the only man able to please the Father. The public ministry may begin.

Before Jesus starts teaching, the chapter closes with a genealogy (Read vv 23-38). Resist the urge to pass by such a list as it exists with purpose. We learn Jesus is now around 30 years old and was thought to be Joseph's son (note how that reflects back to God's pronouncement in v 22). We know His Father is God Himself, not the Nazarene carpenter who helped raise him. This list is similar to the one given in Matthew 1, but it progresses the opposite way, looking back up the timeline. Key is both lines go back to include King David, which is critically important. Also, in Matthew Joseph's father is listed as Jacob but here in Luke it states he was the son of Heli. Is this an error? It helps to recall that Luke, a physician, clearly had an audience with Mary in her later years to gain such intimate detail of Jesus' early life. It stands to reason (although not all commentators agree) that Matthew lists the legal claim of Jesus to be king through the family of Joseph; but Luke is more interested in Jesus' genetic relation to David through Mary and Heli is actually her father. This hinges on the fact Jews did not have a term for son-in-law to differentiate kinship by marriage. Matthew also started his list with Abraham as his gospel centers on God's kingdom through the Jewish people, but Luke goes all the way back to Adam, the original son of God, but who proved unable to please God the way Jesus does. Thus, Jesus does not just identify with Israel, but the entire human race, foreshadowing how the gospel goes out to the entire world. This is also a significant pointer to the next section where Jesus faces the temptation of Satan and we will see how He is superior in every way to Adam.

Applications

1. Pastor John MacArthur wrote, "Hard truths make soft people", meaning truth can soften our hearts to receive the grace and love of God. Have you had a softening of your heart to enable repentance & salvation?
2. God is pleased with Jesus and only Jesus; all the rest of humanity falls short (Romans 3:23). But "in Christ" He looks at us and sees only His pleasing Son. Thus, only divine action can make us right with God. Trust Him!

1. R.C. Sproul, *The Work of Christ*, page 71, 2012.

My desire is to highlight Jesus Christ to you. Toward that end, I am available to discuss any biblical topic or question you may have. I especially want to ensure all who read the studies understand how Jesus Christ is distinctively important to the entire world and to each of us individually. Lastly, all Bible studies are available at Capitol Commission's Alabama page: <https://capitolcom.org/state/alabama>.

Plan to attend our in-house Bible Study during session: Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m. in Room 123 of the State House.

A key facet empowering our ministry is prayer, especially prayer for our elected leaders. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 commands Christians to obediently pray for all in authority. A tool for America's churches to help consistently pray for you, our elected leaders, is available to all via: www.Pray1Tim2.org - Select Alabama and sign up for daily email reminders, courtesy of Capitol Commission.

Share this link with your home church!