

Our Lord's Baptism and Genealogy

Luke 3:15-38

Luke 3:15-20: Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, 16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

Background Notes

The first half of this chapter introduced John the Baptist and his ministry as the Forerunner, preparing and paving the way for the coming of the Messiah. As a result of John's ministry, the people were in a state of expectation. They realized that something big was about to happen. No prophet had spoken in Israel for 400 years. Now, not only was the Lord speaking again to Israel through a prophet, but the Messiah was being announced!

Also contributing to this expectation, at least for some, were the prophecies of Daniel. Daniel 9 actually gives a timetable for the coming of the Messiah. Any serious student of Scripture at that time would have realized that 69 of the 70 weeks (a week = a group of 7 years) in Daniel's vision were coming to an end. The time of the Messiah was at hand. (To study Daniels' prophecies, go to Talks for Growing Christians on the book of Daniel.) The fact that the people were in a state of expectation is backed up by the extra-Biblical writings found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There was great expectation in the wilderness communities (such as Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found) that something eschatological was about to take place.

At the end of verse 15 we see that the people were not only expecting the Messiah, but also wondering whether John the Baptist could himself be the Messiah. John quickly assured them that he was not the Messiah, but only His humble servant – in fact, he said he was not even fit to take off the Messiah's sandals! John told them that he baptized with water, but the Messiah was mightier than he was and he would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit took place at Pentecost, and every believer today is brought into that Spirit-baptized company of believers at the time of his or her salvation. But what about the "baptism with fire"? Is that also a reference to Pentecost and the tongues of fire? Or is it possibly the fiery power and zeal of a committed Christian? I don't think so.

Verse 17 speaks of a future separation of the good kernels of wheat from the unusable chaff, which will be burned with unquenchable fire. Because John the Baptist was speaking to both believers and unbelievers (v7-9), most likely the “baptism with fire” means the fire of judgment on unbelievers that will be associated with our Lord’s return.

In verses 18-20 Luke jumped ahead about a year and a half to complete the record of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was imprisoned because he denounced Herod Antipas for divorcing his wife in order to marry his brother’s wife, and for denouncing all the wicked things that Herod had done (v19). Eventually Herod had John beheaded. In verse 21 Luke returned to the time when John the Baptist was still active in ministry.

Doctrinal Points

1. The baptism of Jesus by John linked Jesus to the godly Jewish remnant.

Verses 21-22: “When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”

The question of why Jesus was baptized by John usually comes up at this point. The Lord Jesus certainly did not need to be baptized - especially not John’s baptism of *repentance*. Jesus didn’t need to repent of any sin because he never sinned. **The Lord Jesus Christ was sinless.** Scripture makes it abundantly clear that Jesus did not have a sinful nature, and that He never sinned. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“He knew no sin.”* 1 Peter 2:22 says, *“He committed no sin,”* and 1 John 3:5 says, *“In Him there is no sin.”*

Luke 3:22 emphasized the perfection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was seen descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the Father’s voice was heard from Heaven. *“You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”* Think of it! The Lord had not done any miracles or preached any sermons yet, but looking back over 30 years of our Lord’s life, God the Father saw **perfection!** So the Lord did not need to be baptized.

The Lord underwent John’s baptism of repentance, not only to set the example for the people, but also to identify with the “godly remnant” – the godly Jews who were rightly separating themselves from the corrupt establishment of Judaism. This corrupt religious establishment included the proud and self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. The baptism of Jesus by John linked Jesus to the godly Jewish remnant.

2. The genealogy of Jesus by Luke linked Jesus to the whole human race

From verse 24 to the end of the chapter, we have a listing of all the names, or links, in our Lord’s lineage back to Adam. You can read all the names in your Bible, but we won’t read them all now to save some time (as well as the fact that I will not pronounce them all properly!). Notice verse 38: *“The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”*

Luke traced our Lord's lineage all the way back to Adam, who was created by the hand of God, as head of the human race.

Matthew's genealogy of the Lord goes back through David to Abraham, to emphasize that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the King of Israel. But Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, to emphasize that Jesus is linked to the whole human race and is the Savior for *all* mankind. Notice the end of the quotation from Isaiah 40 (v6): "*And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*" The Gospel of Luke emphasizes that Jesus is the Savior for the world, not just for the Jewish people.

How do you explain the fact that the genealogies of Christ in Luke and Matthew are different? The simplest explanation is that Matthew traces the Lord's lineage through Joseph (by which Jesus has the legal right to the throne of David), and Luke traces the Lord's genealogy through Mary (which was His natural, or biological lineage). Notice how Luke protected the truth of the virgin birth of Christ in verse 23: "*Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli.*" Luke emphasized that it was *supposed* or *thought* that Jesus was the son of Joseph. But Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph – He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Thus the sinful nature that has been passed from generation to generation since the Fall of mankind was not passed on to our Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ was sinless.

Both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies go back through King David - through David's son Solomon in Matthew's genealogy, and through David's son Nathan in Luke's genealogy. Both Mary and Joseph were descendants of David.

Again, the fact that Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam emphasizes the fact that Jesus is the Savior of the entire world. The genealogy of Jesus by Luke linked Jesus to the whole human race.

Practical Applications

1. Don't rush into full-time ministry.

Verse 23 says that Jesus was about 30 years of age when He began His public ministry. This, by the way, was the age when the Levites began their public service (Numbers 4).

For any young people who are eager to be called into the ministry and serve the Lord full-time, 30 years of age seems old, doesn't it? But it's important not to rush into full-time ministry. Your desires are good and godly, but the Lord may have a lot of lessons to teach you. The training, testing and proving of your faith is important to God.

So don't feel that you've been passed over or shelved if you're in your 30s, or even later, and the doors of full-time ministry haven't opened for you yet. Just be faithful and obedient. Serve the Lord right where you are. Don't *rush* into full-time ministry!

2. Remember - the story isn't over yet!

John the Baptist was never released from prison - in fact, Herod had John beheaded while he was still in prison (Matthew 14:3-12). It doesn't seem fair, does it? On the one hand we have John the Baptist, who was standing up for what is right and speaking out against Herod's sins. On the other hand we have wicked Herod who had divorced his wife to marry Herodias, his brother's wife, and imprisoned John the Baptist because John dared to speak out against all the wicked things Herod had done. Then, as a result of a dance by his stepdaughter, and by order of Herodias, Herod murdered John the Baptist. And it appears that Herod was never brought to justice. It just doesn't seem fair.

Why didn't God rescue John the Baptist? The answer to that question is - the story isn't over yet! John the Baptist is now enjoying the presence of the Lord. He will be resurrected to reign with Christ in His Kingdom here on this earth, and he will live forever in Heaven with the Lord. Herod is now in a "lost eternity," and he will be consigned to eternal damnation in hell at the Great White Throne Judgment (that is yet to take place in the future - Revelation 20). The story isn't over yet!

Maybe something very unfortunate has taken place in your life. Perhaps you were terribly wronged. Perhaps some person or group of people took advantage of you, and they were never brought to justice. Perhaps you took a courageous stand for righteousness and problems have been the result. Listen - the story is not over yet. There is a coming a time of judgment when all wrongs will be righted and justice will prevail! It's only a matter time before "it all comes out in the wash." Remember - *the story isn't over yet!*