

Luke Chapter 3 v 1 - 17

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[0 : 00] Let's read together now from God's Word and from the Gospel of Luke and Chapter 3. Gospel of Luke and Chapter 3.

We're going to read to verse 18 of Luke and Chapter 3. Page 1029, if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles.

Luke Chapter 3, beginning at verse 1. 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 Eteria and Traconitus, and Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene, During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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.

Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth, And all the people will see God's salvation.

[1 : 39] 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?

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.

The axe has already been laid to the root of the trees, And every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

What should we do then? The crowd asked. John answered, Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none. And anyone who has food should do the same.

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. Teacher, they asked. What should we do? Don't collect any more than you are required to, he told them. Then some soldiers asked him.

[2 : 43] And what should we do? He replied, Don't extort money. Don't accuse people falsely. Be content with your pay. The people were waiting expectantly, And were all wondering in their hearts If John might possibly be the Messiah.

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. 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.

With many other words, John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. Let's turn back to Luke and to chapter 3, Which we read just a few moments ago, And particularly concentrate on the ministry of John.

Luke chapter 3, In those first 18 or so verses. I don't think I'm particularly unique in this, But I think there is very little that I find appealing, Or enjoyable about going shopping in a supermarket.

- [4 : 07] I don't think there's anybody who particularly takes pleasure in that, There may be one or two. There's only one time when I think going shopping in a supermarket Is really pleasurable, And that's when they've got free samples to be tested.
- Like, you know, some cheeses or something on the deli counter, Or even maybe one of those tiny little eye filler cups of juice, Or something on the end of the aisle.
- The best, of course, And this is the highlight for me, Is if they've got pieces of sausage, On the meat counter that have been cooked. Because that really is super.
- The general idea, of course, With these tasters and these samples, Is that you just eat a little, Try it, like it, And then buy, of course, A pack or a portion or whatever.
- You're not meant to eat all the samples In replacement for your lunch that day. However tempting that may be. Now there's a great many people, I believe, Who treat religion In the same way that I treat food samples In the supermarket.
- [5 : 08] They have just enough of religion To enjoy a taste once in a while, But never commit to purchasing Or to the whole thing, Or to anything more than that.
- They have this hope that Just sampling now and again Of religion Is enough. Enough just to get them Over the threshold into heaven.
- That, I believe, Is a very popular view in our day. But it's not just in our day That that view of religion Has been prevalent.
- Even back in the days of John, We feel, We see and meet people Who sought to, Sorry, We see John meeting with people Who he confronted, Who he spoke to About this attitude, As he sought to bring them to Christ.
- As he sought to prepare them For the coming Of the Lord Jesus, The Messiah. That's why Luke tells us That John's ministry Was to fulfill the promise Of God in Isaiah.
- [6 : 17] There in verses 4 through to 6. A voice of one Calling in the wilderness. Prepare the way For the Lord. And John himself, When people looked to him And said, Are you the Messiah?
- Told them very clearly There was one coming Who was greater than he. His ministry was Simply preparation, Simply getting ready, Simply laying out The groundwork In one sense.
- So Luke, Who records this, Tells us when this happened. He's very careful In the detail. If you remember At the very beginning Of Luke in chapter 1, As he writes to his friend Theophilus, He says, I've made careful study.
- I've put everything in order. I've examined witnesses. I've gone about this In the most methodical way So that you can believe That what I have written down Is a true, Faithful record Of the life of Christ And the things pertaining to him.
- And so at the very start there In chapter 1, We are told about The historical context. First of all, We're told that internationally, Tiberius Caesar Is the Roman emperor, Ruling over the known world Of that time.
- [7 : 24] All of the Mediterranean basin, Quite a far way Into the Middle East, North into Germanica, Into Britain, Over to the Iberian peninsula.
- And we know that Tiberius Reigned from 14 AD To 37 AD, Quite a long time For a Roman emperor, 23 years. And so we can pinpoint When this took place Because Luke tells us In the 15th year, Of the reign of Tiberius.
- So around about 28, 29 AD. That's when all of these things Are taking place. But then he comes down A bit more locally, Nationally in one sense.
- And he talks about The four regional rulers Covering what was The country of Israel. First of all, There's the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He governed Judea.

That would have included Jerusalem, of course, The very capital city Of the nation. Then we have Herod, Who is the son of Herod. His father was Herod the Great, The one that we meet with In Matthew chapter 1, Who was alive At the time of Jesus' birth.

[8 : 35] And his son, One of his sons Certainly is Herod the Great. He governs that northern area Of Galilee. And he ruled it Nearly most of the life Of Jesus.

So Nazareth was in that area. So Jesus' ruler, In one sense, His local authority Was Herod. Herod had another son, We're told, His brother Philip.

And he also Had a smaller territory And ruled in the north as well. And then a fourth ruler, Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene.

We know Abilene, again, Was a northern area, But we don't know anything About this man Apart from what Luke Records there. And notice that each of these Are called Tetrarchs.

That wasn't a prehistoric creature, Like a pterodactyl Or anything like that. Tetrarch simply means Somebody who rules over A quarter of an area, A quarter of a nation, A quarter of a country.

[9 : 31] So we've got The international leadership, We've got the national leadership, And then we've got The religious leaders as well, Verse 2. And we recognize that There was a leadership, A partnership, A partnership we might say.

There were two people In leadership As high priests. First Annas, And then Caiaphas. Annas was The father-in-law Of Caiaphas. He was, In one sense, The one that carried All the weight.

He had been high priest, But the man who was Governor before Pontius Pilate Removed him From his position Of authority Because he just Didn't tell the line In his view.

But Annas still Held the power. So between him And Caiaphas As we meet them Of course much later on Around the time Of Christ's death, They were the religious Leaders of the nation.

So Luke records These very impressive List of powerful, Influential people, And then he says Something quite remarkable. The word of the Lord Came to John.

[10 : 35] It didn't come to them, Did it? The word of God Did not come to the Emperor, Or to the king, Or the governor, Or the rolling authorities. The word of God Didn't even come To the religious authorities.

The word of God Came to John, Son of Zechariah, In the wilderness, In the desert, In the wild place. That shouldn't surprise Us too much really If we know anything About John, Should it?

If we've read so far The first two chapters Of Luke, We've been a bit Expectant Of what's going to Happen to John Because this is the John, Of course, Who right at the start Whose father Zachariah Was in the temple When an angel met with him And told him He was going to have a son And that his name Was to be John And he was to be A forerunner of the Christ.

And this is the John, Of course, Whose mother Elizabeth, Who was well old, Well past the age Of childbirth, She'd never had any children, She was infertile, And really old, Miraculously conceived And gave birth To John.

This is the same John Who even while he was In the womb Of his mother Elizabeth, We're told, Was filled with the Holy Spirit. So we were expecting Something like this To happen, That he might be a prophet.

[11 : 47] And now, Thirty or so years later, That's exactly what happened. God comes to him, Speaks to him, And this one who himself Has been prepared, Begins to preach A preparatory message About the Lord Jesus Christ.

Preaching in the wilderness. He went into all the country Around the Jordan. In other words, The Jordan Valley, I'm sure you've seen Pictures of that. It's that valley That runs from the north In the Lake of Galilee Right the way down To the Dead Sea.

A valley period, A fertile period, A wilderness period as well. And John begins To preach and to baptize, Which of course, Why he gets his nickname, John the Baptist, As that appears later.

So what was it That John was to preach? What was the word of God That came to him That we're told? Well, we're told there, He preached A baptism of repentance For the forgiveness Of sins.

So he preached to people That they should repent, Which means to turn away From their sin And be baptized With water. Now, This is a very Different baptism To the baptism That Jesus' disciples Were commanded To give later on.

[13 : 04] We know that Because even when Much later on, Paul and the apostles Are preaching, They keep meeting people Who'd been baptized By John. Here's one episode In Acts and chapter 19 Concerning a man Called Apollos.

Paul asked him, What baptism did you receive? John's baptism, They replied. And Paul explains, John's baptism Was a baptism Of repentance.

He told the people To believe in the one Coming after him, That is in Jesus. On hearing this, They were baptized In the name Of the Lord Jesus. So that baptism, In one sense, Belonged to the Before Jesus time, The Old Testament.

And there were many Baptisms we can read about In the Old Testament. Ceremonial washings That took place For people who were Becoming believers Or followers of the Lord. But it was a new sign That Jesus initiated.

That baptism, Which we practice today, In the name of the Father, The Son, And the Holy Spirit. A baptism, Which is unique To Christians. So, John's baptism Was just a preparation For Jesus' coming.

[14 : 15] John's baptism Was acknowledging That, A person had sinned Against God And knew that they Needed his forgiveness. Forgiveness, Which only Jesus, The Messiah, Could bring.

But amazingly, Crowds of people Came, Didn't they? Verse 7, Crowds coming out To be baptized. What was it That moved them? What was it That stirred them To come And to hear The preaching of John?

And what moved them By the preaching of John For them to be Baptized with water? To have this symbol, This sign That they were Turning from their sins. Well, It's clear, Isn't it?

That John's message Was a message Of wrath And judgment. Wrath and judgment. Look at what he says. Who warned you To flee from the coming Wrath, The coming anger Of God?

And then he says Later on, Verse 9, The axe has been laid To the root Of the trees. Every tree That does not Produce good fruit Will be cut down And thrown into the fire. There's anger And judgment From God.

[15 : 17] These words Aren't wishy-washy, Are they? They aren't Come and be baptized. Come and feel good About yourself. No, God, He said, Has already Put his axe To the tree Of people's lives.

And it will fall Upon the lives Of wicked people Whose lives Are not in keeping With God's will. And they shall be Cut down And thrown into the fire. It's clearly a symbol Of hell.

We know that Because later on When he talks about Jesus coming, Jesus is coming To do something similar. He says in verse 17, Of the Messiah, Of Jesus, His winnowing fork Is in his hand To clear his threshing floor To gather the wheat Into his barn But he will burn up The chaff With unquenchable fire.

The winnowing fork Was used With all the wheat And the crops And it was They were lifted up Into the air And the wind Would blow away The chaff Blow away The stubble And the hay And just the wheat The good wheat Will be left Saying God Is coming to judge us Only that which is good Only that which is Pleasing to him Only that which is Acceptable to him Remains.

The rest Will be burnt up Gathered up And used in the fire Of God's judgment. Well, If he's preaching That sort of message That message of judgment And wrath and anger Perhaps it's not surprising People came in their droves To be baptized With the Trying to flee From that To escape From that judgment They believed That by doing What John told them To do They'd be guaranteed A way out Of judgment John said to the crowds Why aren't there crowds Coming into churches?

[17 : 04] Why aren't there crowds Of people Coming to listen To the preaching About judgment? Why are people Indifferent To the Christian message?

Could it be in part Or even largely in part Due to the fact That people do not hear Of the judgment of God Or the anger of God Against sin? Is it that people No longer believe That hell exists?

That they've got nothing To escape from? They've got nothing To be worried about? Is that the reason Why, unlike John There are not crowds At our doors?

Crowds wanting To be saved? I think the truth is That in a large majority Of people in our own day In the United Kingdom They have in the back Of their minds A sort of a Nagging doubt A nagging Niggling doubt That perhaps There may be A day of judgment In the future There's something Within their subconscious Something within People that says Well, you know We should err On the side Of safety We should You know Be ready Just in case God is going to Judge us And so they do What we said At the very beginning They sample Christianity From time to time To quiet That niggling doubt They hope That doing Just a few Religious things Every now and then Like getting the baby Done Like marrying In a church Or going to Their relative's funeral They might escape God's judgment By the skin Of their teeth

Just enough To put off The cravings Just enough To get by The question is this Is it enough? Is just going to church At the carol service Enough?

[18 : 53] Is having your child Christened enough? Is getting married In a church And going from time To time And saying occasionally A prayer?

Is that enough To get us through Over the threshold Away from God's judgment? Well John's resounding Answer to those Who thought that way And came to him In that way Is a very resounding No In fact he is quite Rude With them You brood Of vipers You lotus Snakes In the grass He says He's not very Kind and Christian And gentle And loving He doesn't Mince his words Does he?

He calls them Snakes Perhaps we think That's a bit harsh A bit unfair Perhaps even What I'm saying To people Who just To put off That niggling doubt Do what they Hope is enough They try to be Nice people And they try to do Occasional religious Things Just to be On the safe side And I tell them Because John Tells them That they are Not enough And that they Are far from safe But they are Heading for the Wrath of God But you see The reality is this If we think In our minds That somehow We can hoodwink God If we think Into our minds That somehow We can just Palm God off By letting us Off our crimes Scott free Just because we Pretend to show A little bit of Remorse Or we Pretend to Pay him some Lip service And go along To a church service From time to time What are we doing?

We're ridiculing God We're mocking God We're treating him As some sort of Fool Isn't it Therefore quite right That John says You're a load of snakes Isn't it quite right That he speaks to them Of producing fruit In keeping with Repentance See John says Two things To him doesn't he He says If you mean business With God You're going to Have to prove it It's not just enough To do a little bit Here and there It's going to take A bit more than Some water being Poured or sprinkled Over you It's going to take A few more things Than just saying I'm sorry For you to Escape God's Wrath against sin Produce fruit He says In keeping with Repentance But then he goes On to say If you think You deserve God's pardon Anyway Because of who

Your parents were In other words Abraham was your Father Then you're Fooling yourself Or if you think That somehow You can escape From hell And be Accepted into heaven Because your parents Were Christians Or because Of their faith Or because Your wife Or your husband Is a Christian Or because Your children Are a Christian Or because Of something Somebody you're Related to It's going to Sort of A bit of their Goodness is going To rub off On you Then you're Sadly Grievously Mistaken You're You're not Deserving of God's Favor You're not Deserving of God's Loving kindness Or forgiveness Any more than These stones In the ground Are And in fact These stones In the ground Are more Deserving Because they've Done nothing To break God's law They've done Nothing to Rebell against Him But you Have I wonder If you've Got that Sort of Confidence Or hope Yourself Well You know

[22 : 41] I think God will Be okay I'll be okay When I get To the gates Of heaven I'll be okay Because Well I was Brought up In a Christian Home And I Taught to Say my Prayers Well You know I've said Sorry to God Even if I Didn't Fully Mean it At least The intention Was good Yet Amazingly Wonderfully When John Preaches in This way We might Say well If you Preach that Sort of Message Peter And if Churches Preach that Sort of Message No wonder People won't Come It's no wonder People don't Want to know They want to Hear about Love And fluffy Things And how Nice it is And happy And they Don't want To hear About Love No we Don't Want to Hear about It Necessarily Any more Than a Person who Goes to A doctor Wants to Hear about The illness Or the Diagnosis But unless There's the Preparation Unless there's The realization

Of the danger That we're in Then we will Not take The treatment We will Not receive The healing And if We keep Telling people That all Is well And that They're just Simply Going to Die And become Food for Worms In the Ground Or they're Just going To die And then They're not Going to Exist Or if We tell Them They're Going to Die And they're Going to Go straight To heaven No matter How they've Lived How many Times have We been To funerals Like that Where somebody Who clearly Had never Set dark On the Door of the Church But came And they've Been told Oh this Person's Gone to Heaven They had No interest In the Things of God They had No turning To Christ No wonder If people Hear these Things And they Will have A false Confidence And a False hope They will Have that Little sample Of the Cheese Or the Sausage And they Will say Oh that's Enough For me And it's Not enough Can't live On samples From the Supermarket You can't Live on Just a few Little words Here and There Good works And an Occasional Religion Yet the

Amazing thing Is this Actually rather Than people Running away From John And ignoring Him They came To him And people Listened to What he Said And we're Told there Verse 10 What should We do Then the Crowd asked We're hearing What you're Saying We're receiving This truth And we're Saying what Should we Do Really what He answers Is three Sections here Isn't there But really They're things That apply To all Of us And they Are the Fruit of Repentance Because that's What he Said Keep Produce Fruit In keeping Repentance Not just Saying I'm Sorry Not just Saying oh What a Terrible Person I Am What a Sinner I am That's Not enough There must Be a Clear Transformation There must Be a Clear Change There must Be something Happening In our Lives So he Speaks first Of all To the People in General The crowd In general Verse 11 Anyone who has Two shirts Should share With the one Who's none The same Who's food Should do The same The word

Shirt there In English Is actually Like a Tunic It's like An undergarment Which was Almost like The old Fashioned Sort of Night Shirt That was Worn under Your outside Clothes Worn under Your work Clothes Or your Clothes To keep You warm Or whatever It was an Essential Part Of your Clothing Without One Well You really Would be Poor He's saying Simply this Share Give Love Love Love is The sign Of repentance Repentance Means turning Away from Pleasing Myself And one Of the Signs of That is Yes Pleasing God But seeking To care For and Love Others That's Why it Includes Food Clothing And food Are the Two Essentials Of life The basic Necessities Of life Somebody Who's so Wrapped up In themselves Is unconcerned To give Or to Share It's not Saying that Charity is Saving us Remember These are Evidences That there's A heart That's Prepared Do we

Care Do we Put ourselves Out Or do we Accumulate Wealth Is there Evidence And fruit Of repentance And then We find Even We're Told Tax Collectors Even Tax Collectors And they Really Were Considered The lowest Of the Lowest In the Day To be a Tax Collector Was sort Of the Byword For a Con Artist A thief These Were people Who were Contracted By the Roman Authorities To collect The taxes And it Was sort Of farmed Out A bit Like A Contract So the Roman Authorities Said We need Taxes Collecting In this Area How much Money Will you Collect From This Area And the One Who had The Highest Bid Was the One Given The Contract And then He Would Deputize To the Tax Collectors To collect That Money But of Course It was Open To Abuse Wasn't It It Was Open To Corruption Most Of the Tax Collectors Just Creamed A bit Off The Top Made Sure That They Were Looked After

[27 : 44] They Diddled People And Swindled People We Meet One Later On In Luke Called Zacchaeus We All Know About Him He Was A Short Man Who Climbed A Tree Looking For Jesus And When He Met With Jesus He Was Convicted Of His Sin And He Said To The People There If I Cheated Anybody Out Of Anything I'll Pay Them Back Four Times The Amount He Knew That He Had To Cheat And To Diddle People Repentance Looks Like Being Faithful And True In All Your Dealings It's Resisting The Temptation To Be Greedy And To Deceive If You're Really Repenting If You Really Mean Business With God If You Really Want To Be Saved Then You Need To Turn Away From That Lifestyle To Turn Away From That Attitude Of Heart Which Says I'm The Only One That Matters And

Then We Come To Soldiers As Well These Were Almost Certainly Jewish Soldiers They Weren't Likely To Be Roman Soldiers Who Had No Interest In John's Preaching They Had No Interest In Jewish Religion These Were The Jewish Soldiers They Sort Of Operated Like Policemen Of Our Day And They Could Supplement Their Income By Falsely Accusing People Of A Crime And Then Blackmailing Them Or Taking Bribes I'm Sure The Policemen In Our Country Don't Do That But I've Been In Other Countries Bulgaria Particularly Where Somebody's Been Pulled Over By The Police They Weren't Speeding But Basically They Sort Of Said Give Us So Much Money And We'll Let You Off That's What These Were Doing I Don't Think Anybody Was Being Caught Speeding In John's Day But They Would Say To People You You You Just Stolen Something From There And I'm Going To Arrest You And Nick You Unless You Actually Give Me A Bribe

Pay Me Off That Was Going On All The Time Because Their Wages Were Pretty Abysmal Anyway But John Tells Them Repentance Takes The Form Of Contentment With What We Have Not Misusing The Power That We Have To Our Own Ends Repentance You See In Each One Of These Cases Very Similar Isn't It Funny How In One Sense It's Always To Do With Possessions Here In What He Teaches It's To Do With Finance It's To Do With The Basic Necessities Of Life Repentance Is To Do With A Life That's Transformed And Changed And Is Different And For Each Of Us Dear Friends Repentance Will Take A Others There's No Temptation To Abuse Our Position Of Power In The Office Or In The School Or In The Workplace To Bully Or To Threaten Some Of Us The Temptation Is To

Be Difficult The Temptation Is To Be Arrogant Or Proud Or Rude The Temptation Is To Be Self Serving But All Of This Is Simply Preparation All Of This Is Simply Half The Answer To Escape The Coming Wrath The Mistake For Many People In Thinking Is If I Do These Outward Things If I If I Do These Religious Things If I Turn Over A New Leaf That's And Live A Better Life That's Enough And For Many People That's Their View Of Christian Message Isn't It They Stop At John The Baptist They Stop In The End Of The Old Testament He Was The Last Old Testament Prophet And They Say That's Enough Just Being Good Seeing That I've Done Wrong And Trying To Put It Right That's Enough That Will Secure Me God's Forgiveness But John Is Basically Saying No It's Not

Because They Look To Him And Say Are You The Messiah Are You The One Who's Bringing God Salvation He's Saying No There's Someone Coming He's The One That's Going To Do The Work I'm Just Laying Down The Groundwork John John Could Never Save Anybody He Could Only Point People To Jesus The Savior He Was The One Preparing Them By Baptizing Them With Water For The Time When He Would Come The Christ Would Come And Baptize Them With The Holy Spirit Because It's Only The Holy Spirit's Baptism It's Only That Transformation Of The Heart Within It's Only By The Giving Of Faith To Trust In Christ That Anyone Is To Be Saved There's One Coming And He's The One That We'll Be Thinking About Next Sunday Morning Jesus Let's Pray Together Shall We Let's Pray We

[32 : 53] Thank You Our God And Father For Your Perfect Honesty With Us We Thank You For Your Faithfulness We Thank You For Your Clarity We Thank You That You Do Not Pretend With Us Or As It Were Give Us Messages Of False Hope Or Say There There Never Mind But You Are The God Who Shows Us The Reality Of The Situation Just Like Jesus The Rising Son So We Thank You That You Are The God Who Shines Light Through Your Word Into Our Hearts And Lives And Lord There May Be Some Of Us Even Here This Morning Who Hope Or Think That We Are Have Done Enough To Be Safe From Your Wrath There Some Of Us Perhaps Who Think That We Are Okay We Go To Church Occasionally We Do The Right Thing Some Of The Time And We Just Sample

At Christianity But Lord We Pray That Again That You Would Bring Us To Our Knees That You Would Show Us That This Is Just Not Enough It's To Fall Far Short Of Receiving The Forgiveness We Need And The Salvation We Need Because Lord In Our Lives There's No Real Transformation And Change We Pray Oh Lord That You Would Keep Us From Trusting In Our Own Selves Or Trusting In Someone Else Other Than Jesus Lord Deliver Us From That False Faith Give Us True Repentant Hearts And Lives That Show That Repentance And Prove That Repentance By The Way We Live Help Us And Prepare Us We Pray To Receive Christ To Receive Him As The One Who Baptizes With The Holy Spirit Oh Lord Come Upon Those Hearts Of Ours Which Are Still Lifeless And Lost With

Your Holy Spirit And Bring Life Bring Faith Bring Fullness Bring Contentment We Ask These Things In Jesus Name Amen To Him Who Is Able To Keep You From Falling And To Present You Before His Presence In Glory Without Fault And With Great Joy To The Only God Our Savior Be Glory Majesty Power And Authority Through Jesus Christ Our Lord Before All Ages Now And Forever More Amen Amen