

Luke 3:15-22

"The Beloved Son"

April 28, 2024

1. Intro

a. 15 weeks...

i. That's how long we have been in our study of the Gospel of Luke so far

1. We've walked through the miraculous conception and birth of both John the Baptist and of our Lord Jesus
2. We've seen the young boy, Jesus, in his Father's house, amazing all the teachers in the Temple with his wisdom and insight
3. And we've watched as John the Baptist began his ministry, preparing the way for the coming King, preaching to the people a message of repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins

a. But now it is time for John to step aside

i. It is time for him to become lesser, and for Christ to become greater

ii. And so, as we look at our passage for this morning, Luke 3:15-22, we'll break this passage up into three sections...

1. A New Baptism
2. An Evil Ruler
3. A New Kingdom

2. First, A New Baptism

a. Let's look at Luke 3:15-16

i. ¹⁵As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

b. Just take a moment and think about this "expectation" that was in the hearts of the people

i. We must not forget that Israel was NOT an independent country during this time

1. The region of Judea, and all the lands around it, were all part of the Roman Empire
 - a. Israel, or what was left of it in those days, was occupied territory
 - b. The ruler of the region, Herod Antipas, who we'll talk about in a moment, was a ruler appointed by Rome
 - i. It was likely his soldiers that came to John in the previous verses that we looked at last week

2. Long ago in their past were the days of King David and his son, Solomon

a. Long ago were the days of Israel's wealth and political power and influence in the Middle East

i. Many had returned from their exile in Babylon

ii. The Temple had even been rebuilt

1. But, as we've talked about before, Israel would live the next few centuries battling the armies of the Greek kings, and then the Romans
2. All the glory they had once known, was FAR back in their memories

ii. But NOW, here is this man who is DIFFERENT than all the military leaders that had tried to rise up in the past

1. Here is this man who lives out in the wilderness, wearing a garment made of camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey
 - a. Everything about this man, including his message of repentance, points the people back in their minds to the great prophet of the Scriptures, the prophet Elijah
 - b. Plus, you have to wonder how much word had spread about John's miraculous birth thirty years earlier, and all the things that the angel, Gabriel, had said to John's father, Zechariah
 - i. Surely Zechariah and Elizabeth didn't keep these things secret?
 - ii. Surely the people knew something of the role that John was prophesied to play?
- iii. So now, as John enters into the scene, proclaiming an incredible message about the Kingdom of Heaven being at hand...
 1. And as he began baptizing more and more people...
 2. And as he gained more and more followers...
 - a. It really isn't all that surprising that the people were wondering in their hearts, "Could this be THE CHRIST?"
 - i. Could this be the Anointed One... the MESSIAH?
 1. For over four hundred years, the people of Israel had been awaiting the fulfilment of the prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel chapter 9, which told of the coming of the Anointed One
 - a. In Hebrew, this was the Mashiach, who we call... the Messiah
 3. The people had a LOT to be expectant about
 - a. But John was VERY clear in his response, wasn't he?
- iv. I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire...
 1. You have to love John's humility as the time for Jesus' entrance drew near
 - a. John KNEW his role
 - i. Even as he grew in popularity
 - ii. Even as he baptized the masses of people
 - iii. Even as he began to gather around him his own disciples
 1. John KNEW that he was just the messenger
 2. I LOVE how John refers to Jesus in this verse...
 - a. "He who is mightier than I"
 - i. That is a name for Jesus that we would ALL do well to remember, isn't it???
 1. Who can I turn to when I've lost my job, or run across hard times financially?
 - a. HE WHO IS MIGHTIER THAN I
 2. Who can I turn to when I get a bad report from the doctor about my health or the health of someone I love?
 - a. HE WHO IS MIGHTIER THAN I
 3. Who can I turn to when things at work are a mess, the economy seems to be going down the drain, and our country just keeps getting closer and closer to absolute insanity?
 - a. HE WHO IS MIGHTIER THAN I

4. Who saved me, and rescued me from slavery to sin, and clothed me in HIS righteousness, and gave me the right to become a child of God?
 - a. HE WHO IS MIGHTIER THAN I
 - ii. Keep THAT name of Jesus on the forefront of your lips, Christians, and I guarantee your perspective on this life will change DRAMATICALLY!
3. So “He Who is Mightier Than I” was coming
 - a. And John said that he was not even worthy to untie the straps of this man’s sandals
 - i. One of the lowliest tasks of servants in those days... unstrapping the shoestrings of their master’s sandals
 1. And John said that he was not even worthy to do that for the One who was coming
 - a. Again, just incredible humility
- c. And then John makes a powerfully prophetic statement
 - i. The multitudes of people had been coming out to John to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan
 1. As we’ve talked about before, its not like this was a meaningless ritual
 - a. Luke was clear back in verse 3 that this was a baptism of repentance, FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS
 - i. So for those who were truly repentant in their hearts, this was an act of faith by which God TRULY forgave their sin
 - b. But here in verse 16, John tells the people, “You haven’t seen ANYTHING yet!!”
 - i. I baptize with water...
 - ii. But the One who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire!
- d. Now, if we’re thinking through these things carefully, we might ask the question here...
 - i. Does this mean that everyone that was baptized by Jesus during his three-and-a-half year ministry, ALSO received the Holy Spirit?
 1. In John’s Gospel, he tells us that after the Wedding at Cana, and after Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, that...
 - a. “Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there and was baptizing.”
 - b. John the Baptist’s disciples even seem to be getting a little worried about Jesus’ growing popularity, as they go to John and say to him in John 3:26,
 - i. “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness – look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him...”
 2. So, were these growing numbers of people baptized with the Holy Spirit, as John had foretold in Luke 3:16?
 - a. Well, we can say NO for a couple of reasons
 - i. The first reason we would obviously point to is the Day of Pentecost
 1. This was the day that Jesus told his disciples to be waiting for
 2. This was the day that he had told them they would receive the promised gift from the Father
 3. This was the day that the Holy Spirit would fall MIGHTILY within their midst!

- a. So it wouldn't make sense if there were already people being baptized with the Holy Spirit during Jesus' ministry
 - i. That would have completely deflated all the purpose and excitement of that day!
 - ii. But the second reason we can say that all those baptized during Jesus; ministry DID NOT receive the Holy Spirit is found in John, chapter 4
 - 1. In verse 1, John writes, "Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee."
 - a. But in the middle of that sentence, John inserts a parenthetical statement that is VERY important
 - b. After he says that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist, John the Apostle makes a note to say, "although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples"
 - 2. It could be argued that Jesus didn't baptize anyone because he didn't want anyone name-dropping him and claiming special privileges
 - a. Isn't that just what WE would do if we had actually been baptized by the Son of God?
 - 3. But I think it can also be argued that Jesus did not baptize anyone during his earthly ministry because HIS baptism would be with the Holy Spirit
 - a. And the time had not yet come for that baptism to happen
 - b. So what happened to all of those that were baptized by Jesus' disciples?
 - i. Well, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 that, after Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve...
 - 1. And then he appeared to more than FIVE HUNDRED of "the brothers"
 - a. MAYBE, these 500+ brothers (and undoubtedly even more "sisters") were among those who had been baptized by Jesus' disciples
 - b. And MAYBE, these 500+ were among the three THOUSAND that were added to the numbers on Pentecost, as they also were baptized with the Holy Spirit!
 - i. The Scriptures do not explicitly tell us these things, but I definitely don't think it is a stretch to assume that this was what happened
- ii. So John the Baptist says that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit, and we see that fulfilled from Pentecost onward... even till today
 - 1. For that is what happens when ANYONE is born again
 - a. In fact, Jesus would say that this is THE necessary prerequisite for being able to enter into the Kingdom of God
 - i. In John 3, when Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night, and says to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no

one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him," Jesus answered him...

1. ³Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... ⁵Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

ii. My friends, if you desire to see the Kingdom of God, you MUST be born again

1. And in order to be born again, you MUST be born OF THE SPIRIT

a. It doesn't matter if you made a profession of faith when you were young

b. It doesn't matter if you come to church every Sunday morning

2. To see the Kingdom of God, you must be born again... and that ONLY happens when you are baptized with the Holy Spirit!

2. This is the baptism Jesus came to initiate

a. This is the baptism that began on the Day of Pentecost

e. But what about the whole "baptizing with fire" part of Luke 3:16?

i. What does THAT mean?

1. Well, since we were talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit happening on the Day of Pentecost, it would be easy to immediately make the jump to say that the baptism with fire ALSO referred to Pentecost, as Acts 2 tells us that,

a. "Divided tongues as of fire appeared to the disciples and rested on each one of them"

i. Well, it's possible that's what it means

2. But if we just stick to the immediate context, I think we find a better answer...

ii. In verse 17, John says of the coming Messiah, "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

1. I believe that John is wanting us to see this crucial two-fold aspect of Jesus' ministry

a. For those who are baptized with the Holy Spirit – those who are TRULY saved – they will be gathered into his barn

i. A picture of all of the saved being gathered into the Lord's Kingdom

b. But, for those who DO NOT receive the Holy Spirit – those who ARE NOT saved – they are the chaff

i. And they will be burned with unquenchable fire

2. At harvest time in those days, the stalks of wheat would all be brought to the threshing floor, where they were either beat with sticks, or walked over by donkeys

a. As this happened, the kernels of wheat would become separated from the husks that had covered them

i. Then the workers would come in with their winnowing forks, and they would toss all the wheat AND the husks up into the air

- ii. If there was a good breeze blowing, the wheat would fall straight back to the floor
 - 1. But the husks, the chaff, now just empty, paper-thin shells, would blow off in the wind
- b. John tells the people that the coming Messiah will baptize with the Holy Spirit – he will begin identifying the wheat that are truly his
 - i. But Jesus is also coming with his winnowing fork
 - ii. And all the chaff that is left – all those who ARE NOT baptized with the Holy Spirit – will not just blow off in the wind
 - 1. But rather, they will be gathered up, and they will be burned with unquenchable fire
 - a. He Who is Mightier Than I is coming...
 - i. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit
 - ii. And he will baptize with the fires of judgment
- iii. This is the NEW baptism that Jesus will soon begin!
 - 1. But then, in verse 18, things take a very unexpected turn, as we move to our next section, “An Evil Ruler”

3. An Evil Ruler

- a. It’s hard for us who have grown up in the church to really feel the weight of this next passage
 - i. We all know the story of John the Baptist
 - 1. We’ve heard it over and over and over again, how John’s ministry – and ultimately his life – were cut much shorter than anyone had expected
 - ii. But just think about what it would be like to read these things for the first time
 - 1. Think about what it might have been like for Theophilus as he read this letter for the first time
 - a. Maybe he knew something about Jesus, but hadn’t heard a lot about John?
 - i. And now, as things are starting to get really exciting, we read verses 18-20...
 - 1. *¹⁸So with many other exhortations [John] preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.*
 - iii. This is meant to be a jarring moment for the reader of Luke’s Gospel
 - 1. If you notice, Luke even leaves his chronological, orderly account to insert this passage in here
 - a. Jesus gets baptized by John in the NEXT passage
 - b. But here, in verses 18-20, Luke startles all of us by telling us that not only was John NOT the Christ, but he would soon be locked up by Herod
 - i. There are a couple of things we can learn from this passage
- b. The first is that the “good news” is not always “good”
 - i. Verse 18 says that, “With many other exhortations he preached GOOD NEWS to the people.”
 - 1. Well, if John was just preaching “good news” why did he get thrown into prison?
 - a. Who gets imprisoned for going around saying lots of good things???
 - b. We might take that even further and say, “Who gets crucified for just being a good teacher?”
 - 2. It’s here that we have to define the “good news” of the Scriptures

- a. Yes, the good news is absolutely that the Messiah has come, and that he has come to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that he will gather into his Kingdom all who are his
 - i. That is GREAT news!!
- b. But in order to receive this good news, you must first REPENT of your sin
 - i. You must acknowledge that you are living in rebellion against your King
 - ii. You must confess that you have made an idol that you love to worship... and that idol is YOUR SELF
 - iii. You must admit that you are a sinner, and that the only thing you truly deserve in this life is death
- 3. For some, through the grace of God the Father, they will come to see these things as true about themselves
 - a. They WILL repent
 - b. They WILL be baptized with the Holy Spirit
 - c. They WILL find everlasting life in the Lord Jesus Christ!
- 4. But, for many, they will find this call to “Repent!” to be utterly offensive
 - a. They will be completely insulted that you would dare to accuse them of such horrible things
 - b. They might laugh in your face... they might turn around and walk away in disgust... or, they might throw you in prison
 - i. This was the case with Herod Antipas
 - 1. In John’s preaching of the good news, at some point he came in contact with the Tetrarch of Galilee
 - 2. And John’s message to Herod was the same message he gave to everyone else...
 - a. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!
 - 3. Unfortunately, things don’t tend to go well when you tell politicians to repent
 - a. So, on top of all the other evils that Herod had committed, he added this to them all...
 - i. He locked John up in prison
- c. And I would say that this teaches us a second thing about our role as Christians in a pagan community
 - i. Our message to our politicians is the same as our message to our neighbor
 - 1. We have the greatest news in all the earth to give to people!
 - a. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, they can now have their sins forgiven
 - i. Even better, they will receive life, ETERNAL life, if they would simply place all their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior
 - ii. There is no other news on the planet that tops THAT news!
 - 2. But at the same time, part of our message to those who are lost is that they MUST repent of their sin
 - a. And again, this is the same message we proclaim to our friends, or neighbors, or coworkers
 - b. But this must ALSO be the message that we proclaim to the politicians who would seek to use the church for their own personal gain

- i. Friends, I believe we are in increasing danger of losing our witness in the world, as we align ourselves with unrepentant politicians, as a means of keeping our power and influence and comfort
 - 1. John the Baptist COULD HAVE easily kept quiet when it came to Herod's personal choices
 - 2. He might've continued in ministry for another few years if he would've just looked the other way when it came to Herod's sexual immorality and evil
 - 3. Think about all the people he could have continued to point to Jesus, IF he would have just been silent about Herod's sin
- c. But that's not what John the Baptist did
 - i. And that's not what we should do either
 - ii. Our message to our political leaders MUST be that they must repent... even if it means we get thrown in jail for it
 - 1. Sadly, Herod's evils DID NOT end after throwing John the Baptist in prison
 - 2. Nor did they end after he had John beheaded, as we'll see in a few chapters
 - 3. No, Herod's evil will continue on into the book of Acts, as Luke tells us that it was Herod who had James, the brother of John, killed for proclaiming Christ
 - a. And it was Herod who would have also killed Peter, had not an angel supernaturally delivered Peter from prison
 - i. God eventually brought down his judgment upon Herod, but not until Herod had committed significant evils against the church
 - 4. This is the world into which we have been born again, Christians
 - a. And we must remember that our TRUE allegiance is not to a politician, or a political party, or even to our country
 - b. Our TRUE allegiance is to Christ our King
 - iii. So John spoke of the new baptism coming through Christ
 - iv. He ended up in prison because of the evil ruler, Herod Antipas
 - v. And in our final section, Jesus, the TRUE King, arrives!

4. A New Kingdom

- a. In verses 21-22, we read...
 - i. *²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²²and 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."*
- b. Friends, just to be perfectly clear on this point...
 - i. Jesus had NO NEED WHATSOEVER to be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins
 - 1. If you haven't seen it, there's a warning going around Facebook about a children's book that was published back in 2013, but apparently is still in circulation,
 - a. In this book, titled, "The Baptism of Jesus," the author has Jesus coming to John the Baptist saying to him, "I have come to the river today, to wash my sins away."
 - i. This is heresy, plain and simple

- ii. And it is presented to our kids in the form of a cartoon book
- 2. Jesus most certainly DID NOT need to have his sins washed away, for he HAD NO SIN
 - a. From the moment of his conception in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was pure... spotless... unblemished by sin
 - i. He was the PERFECT Lamb of God
- 3. So why then did he need to be baptized?
 - a. Matthew 3:13-15 makes it clear...
 - i. *¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS."*
 - b. Luke told us back in verse 2 that "the word of God came to John son of Zechariah"
 - i. And this word FROM GOD was to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins
 - ii. So if Jesus didn't need to repent, WHY did he need to be baptized?
 - 1. Because HIS FATHER had commanded it!
 - a. And in order that the righteousness of His Father's commands might be fulfilled, Jesus HUMBLY submitted himself to His Father, and he stooped to be baptized by John, a sinner
 - b. We talked earlier about John's incredible humility...
 - i. Friends, the baptism of Jesus by a sinful man is a level of humility that we cannot even begin to comprehend!!
 - c. Yet Jesus did so willingly, for this is what His Father had commanded
 - ii. It's no wonder that, at this moment in Jesus' life, as he was about to embark on an emotionally, physically, and mentally painful journey, we would get this beautiful picture of the Trinity...
 - 1. All coming together, HERE, in this moment, as the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus, and the Father said for all to hear,
 - a. "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased!"
 - i. The beloved Son was about to go to war
 - 1. The previous thirty years of his life had been lived in relative peace and quiet back in Nazareth
 - ii. But the time had come
 - iii. The journey to the cross was now at hand
 - iv. The beginning of Christ's establishment of his Kingdom on this earth was soon to begin
 - b. And so, the Holy Spirit showed himself in bodily form, like a dove
 - c. And the Father spoke in the midst of the people...
 - i. Something that had not happened for CENTURIES
 - 1. Can't you just feel the PRIDE in his voice as He speaks to His Son???
 - a. As the Son begins his ministry by humbling himself in baptism, God the Father says
 - i. You are my BELOVED Son
 - ii. With you I am WELL pleased

- c. Jesus came into his ministry bringing with him a new baptism... a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire
- d. John, who had so faithfully and so humbly prepared the way for the King, was now imprisoned by the evil ruler, Herod Antipas
- e. But the King was now here!
 - i. And, for the rest of our time in the Gospel of Luke – however long that time may be – we will get front row seats to see how the Beloved Son begins to bring the Kingdom of Heaven down to this earth
 - 1. May Christ be exalted in our midst as we continue this journey!