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Luke 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Luke 3.

Topics.

- John the Baptist proclaims a baptism of repentance.
- Valleys filled, mountains made low and crooked places made straight.
- From these stones God is able to raise up children for Abraham.
- Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees
- Baptism with fire.
- He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
- Jesus is baptised.
- The genealogy of Jesus.
- Sceptics and the conception of Jesus.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to be registered, Mary gave birth to Jesus, an angel of the LORD appeared to shepherds and told them the LORD'S Christ the Saviour has been born in Bethlehem. Jesus is circumcised; Simeon prophecies that Jesus will be a light for the Gentiles and for God's people Israel. Jesus, in the temple at Jerusalem during the time of Passover at twelve years old amazes everyone with his questions and answers.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

LUKE 3:1-6

John the Baptist proclaims a Baptism of Repentance.

- **Luke 3:1-6:** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, ⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Cited from Isaiah 40:3-5) (Isaiah 42:16).

Caesar: (Kaiser) is the title of the Roman emperor i.e., Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1) Caesar Tiberius (Luke 3:1) (Luke 20:22) Caesar Claudius (Acts 11:28) and Caesar Nero (Phil. 4:22).

Pontius Pilate: was the Roman governor of Judaea (Matt. 27:2) (Luke 3:1), he caused the slaughter of certain Galileans (Luke 13:1), tried Jesus and ordered his crucifixion and allowed Joseph of Arimathea to take Jesus' body down for the cross.

Phillip and Herod the Tetrach: tetrarch is the plural number of four and Herod is a compound of the word heroes and was the name of four Jewish kings. Herod the Tetrach was the ruler of a fourth part of a country.

His brother was Philip, who was the husband of Herodias (Matt. 14:3) (Mark 6:17) (Luke 3:19) who Herod took for his wife and John condemned him for it.

Galilee: (called Galilee of the Nations) is the region in northern Israel on the west side of the Sea of Galilee Jesus lived in Galilee and many of the disciples were from Galilee. Much of Jesus public ministry took place along its north shore and it was in Galilee Jesus appeared to the apostles after his death and resurrection. The Sea of Galilee is also called the Sea of Tiberias, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Chinnereth and the Sea of Cinneroth.

Abilene: was a Roman province in Palestine in a region of Syria (Luke 3:1).

Annas and Caiaphas the high priest: during the time of Christ the high priesthood was almost a political office the priests were still coming from the descendants of Aaron, but were generally appointed to worldly considerations. The Roman rulers appointed not only the civil officers but also the High Priests so the priesthood gradually declined spiritually. Caiaphas held the office of High Priest with Annas as a sort of High Priest overseer.

John's message: was repent, be water baptised and your sins will be forgiven.

Make his paths straight: is directed to all those serving God (especially the religious leaders) and those who are seeking the Lord it is a call to get their lives right (i.e., to stop perverting justice, committing adultery, cheating in business, oppressing the poor and using people for one's own selfish gain etc.).

Valleys filled, mountains made low and crooked places made straight: the words, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level," Means, everything that opposes, hinders and stands in the way of God's salvation will be removed (i.e. the law, religious ceremonial rites, holy days, feasts, the high priest the hypocritical and prideful religious leaders (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) and the entire Levitical priesthood will be brought low). The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ destroyed all these making the path to salvation the same for everyone (Jew and Gentile), because everyone can now be saved to eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No-one needs a human high priest anymore as Jesus is the perfect and eternal High Priest for all who come to him.

LUKE 3:7-9

Crowds come to Hear John the Baptist.

- **Luke 3:7-9:** He (John) said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Multitudes of Jews came out to John in the wilderness, to be baptised, we know they are Jews because John tells them not to think that because they are descendants of Abraham that makes them right with God. Rather than welcome and praise them for coming to be baptised John calls them a brood of vipers and tells them to show in their life actions and behaviour that shows they have repented of their crooked ways. Before John was prepared to baptise anyone their needed to be some outward evidence that they had repented.

NOTE: this shows that during the days Jesus walked on earth and prior to his death and resurrection of Christ the path to salvation was:

1. Hearing the word of God.
2. Being convicted of sin.
3. Repenting (with outward signs evidencing it).
4. Being water baptised.
5. Accepting Christ as saviour.

After Christ's resurrection step four and step five could be in any order (i.e., a person may repent, accept Christ and then be water baptised, this was impossible prior to the crucifixion because obviously Christ was still sowing the seed of God word on earth).

From these stones God is able to raise up children for Abraham: the phrase, "God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham," means from the Gentile race God is able to raise up children for Abraham." At this time the Jews saw the Gentiles as an unclean race without God and themselves as the Holy race with God.

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees: the phrase, "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees," refers to the descendants of Abraham (the Jews) especially the religious leaders the chief priest, Pharisees and scribes. John is telling the Jews just because they are descendants of Abraham does not make them right with God they still have to live a godly lifestyle, meaning they need to treat people with justice, decency and respect especially the poor.

Trees cut down and thrown into the fire: John's words, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire," means whoever does not to all they can to fulfil the royal law and the command of Jesus to love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39) (Mark 2:28-31) (James 2:8) will be rejected by God and given over to eternal death. Jesus command to love your neighbour as yourself, means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. The spirit behind the law is love because each law protects another human from harm. In the book of Romans Paul states: -

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

The spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from physical, financial, sexual, verbal and emotional and spiritual harm, thus those who know God aim to keep the law because it is the right and loving thing to do. It fulfils the Ten Commandments regarding man, and the Royal Law love your neighbour as yourself. It pleases God and brings a good testimony to His name and the name of, Jesus and the Christian faith. Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because they are saved. They understand that righteousness is a free gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort. Though the law is splendid as a guide to understanding God's will, as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy, but the Gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment, the law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Romans 3:19-20) (Ephesians 2:13-22).

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).

- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour. The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. Thus, living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person. It is all about doing right to others, thus the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt. 5).

- These are the things that delight the heart of God, a wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see:
- Matthew 5 in Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

LUKE 3:10-14

The People ask John, "What then shall we do?"

- **Luke 3:10-14:** And the crowds asked him (John) "What then shall we do?" ¹¹And he (John) answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he (John) said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

The crowds, tax collectors, soldiers ask Jesus what should they do to get their lives right before God and John tells them to help those in trouble when they are able, give to the poor, don't steal from people, don't bully others or tell lies and falsehoods about them and to be content with what they have, summing this all up into very simple terms it means treat your neighbour as you would want them to treat you (i.e. with respect, honesty and decency). John is not telling the people anything new the great prophet Isaiah tells the people of Israel in the Old Testament that the LORD delights when He sees the oppressed being set free, people sharing their food with the poor and giving shelter to the homeless (Isaiah 58:6-7) and Daniel tells the people with him to stop their sins and replace them with righteousness by showing mercy to the oppressed (Dan. 4:27).

LUKE 3:15-20

Baptism with Fire.

- **Luke 3:15-20:** As 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 with fire. ¹⁷His 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." ¹⁸So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him (John) 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.

It is interesting to notice that John's generation were expecting the promised Messiah to appear, the Christ the prophets of old said was to come and of whom the Old Testament Scriptures speak of so much so they thought it might be John.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: John's words, "Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire," means Christ will come with a baptism that leads to eternal life or condemnation to eternal death. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a baptism of salvation it is a deliverance from the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of light whereas the baptism of fire refers to those who hear the Gospel of Christ and reject it which results in condemnation and eternal death. Thus the reason it is called a baptism in the Holy Spirit and a baptism with fire, the Gospel brings a person to a crisis decision (the baptism) because this moment of decision will determine their eternal future (i.e., to life or to death).

LUKE 3:21-22

Jesus is Baptised.

- **Luke 3:21-22:** Now 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."

The words, "You are my beloved Son," takes the mind of the reader to a banquet table of Scriptures in the Old Testament that echo the Lord Jesus Christ one of which is the following verses in Psalm two:

- Why do the nations (Rome) rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth set themselves (Pilate and Herod) and the rulers (Pharisees, Scribes and Priests) take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed (Jesus Christ) saying, ³"Let us burst their (the apostles and disciples) bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." (Herod, Pilate and the religious leaders) ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵Then he will speak to them (Herod, Pilate and the Pharisees) in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶"As for me, I have set my King (Jesus Christ) on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷I (Christ) will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "*You are my Son; today I have begotten you* (Psalm 2:1-7).

Another of these great Old Testament echoes of Christ is found in the following words of Isaiah:

- Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; (well pleased) I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations (the remainder of the psalm speaks entirely of Christ) (Isaiah 42:1).

Ponder for a moment: the people were thinking John may have been the Christ, but God left no-doubt in their minds who His Anointed really was, imagine their wonder and thrill when they heard the voice of God calling the one John was baptising, "His beloved Son." God at this moment is anointing Jesus for his ministry. Some in Christian circles teach that being fully immersed in water (as John's baptism was) is a thing of the past, but even after Christ's death and resurrection it is recorded throughout the book of Acts that those who believed the Gospel, repented and surrendered their lives by faith to Christ were water baptised. Since there are such clear examples recorded by the apostles of water baptism it seems strange that some today feel the practise of being fully immerse

in water is an out-dated practise especially since the Lamb without blemish set the example. For those who enter into the waters of baptism with a heart that is solely dedicated and focused toward God it is a very real spiritual experience, but for those who are doing it because it is the tradition of the church it is no different to taking a bath or going for a swim. Without faith toward God water baptism means nothing and will have no effect on the heart of the one being baptised. For further information see the title:

- Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

LUKE 3:23-38

The Genealogy of Jesus.

- **Luke 3:23-38:** Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³²the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, ³³the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Matthew says that Jacob is the father of Joseph (Matt. 1:16) while Luke says that Heli is the father of Joseph (Luke 3:23). Jacob and Heli are both referred to as the father of Joseph, but it is obvious to all that Jacob and Heli cannot both be Joseph father therefore Joseph relationship to Heli must be different to his relationship to Jacob. Scholars have wrestled with the problems of these two genealogies from the second century, when pagan critics raised the difficulty. There are far too many explanations to pursue them all in this study. The theory that most accept begins with understanding that the meaning of the Hebrew word begat as used in the genealogies of the King James Bible is not exact in its meaning it could indicate immediate descent or remote descent it can refer to an adoptive relation or legal heirship as well as procreation. With this understanding many accept the idea that Heli (Eli) was the father of Mary and therefore the father in law of Joseph by his marriage to Mary and that Jacob was Joseph's biological father.

David and Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon and Nathan.

- From Solomon's bloodline came Joseph through his biological father Jacob (Matt. 1:6-16).
- From Nathan's bloodline came Heli (Luke 3:23-31) who is believed by many to be the father of Mary.

Thus, Jacob is Joseph's biological father while Heli is his father in law. With this view in mind Jesus was biologically born of the royal line of David though his mother Mary and was by marriage legally the rightful heir of the royal line by his foster father Joseph.

Luke's genealogy of Jesus: traces Jesus line through David's son Nathan because Mary came through Nathan's descendants because her father was Heli (or Eli).

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus: traces Jesus line through David's son Solomon because Joseph came through Solomon's descendants and because Joseph acted as foster father to Jesus being legally responsible for him (Matt. 1:1) (Matt. 1:6).

The Son of Adam, David and the Holy Spirit: Jesus is the Son of Adam through Mary and the Son of David through Joseph and the Son of God by the Holy Spirit.

NOTICE: how beautifully both Luke and Matthew avoid calling Joseph Jesus Father, because Joseph did not beget Jesus like all the previous fathers mentioned in the genealogies. Luke writes Jesus being the supposed son of Joseph and Matthew says, Joseph the husband of Mary to whom Jesus was born (Luke 3:23) (Matt. 1:16), but despite any difficulties there may be in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke the virgin birth is very plain in both records of it.

Sceptics and the conception of Jesus: some doubt the conception of Jesus because it appears that Mary never told Joseph, but went straight to her cousin Elizabeth for three months, they say that Joseph was totally ignored by God until it was almost too late (i.e., he was going to divorce her and only then is he brought into the story).

THE STORY OF MARY AND JOSEPH, AND THE CONCEPTION OF JESUS

Luke in chapter one tells us that Gabriel told Mary she was going to conceive by the Holy Spirit (the creative power of God) and then he writes that she arose in those days and went to visit Elizabeth her cousin, but the words "those days" does not mean she left immediately to go and visit Elizabeth but that sometime during those days she went (Luke 1:39). The birth of Samson is a similar story an angel came to the wife of a man named Manoah. After the angel had visited Manoah's barren wife and told her she will conceive and bear a son (she named Samson) we are told that she went and told her husband all that had happened and what the angel had said and Manoah believed his wife. (Judges 13:2-25). It is most likely that Mary like Manoah's wife would have gone to find Joseph and tell him about the amazing things she had just experienced and everything Gabriel had said and then gone to help her cousin Elizabeth during her pregnancy. It is possible Joseph is left out of the story until later for two reasons:

1. Because he is not the focus of the story.
2. Because unlike Manoah he did not believe Mary which is totally understandable especially when we consider that people today still don't believe Mary's story.

Matthew writes when Mary was found with child she went and told Joseph, this does not mean she had actually given birth to the child, but that with the knowledge or proof that she was actually pregnant she went and told Joseph sadly Joseph still did not believe Mary's story regarding the conception of the child and was considering putting her away so the angel of the Lord comes to him and confirms Mary's story (Matt. 1:18-25). Some say surely the angel would have gone to Joseph long before this, but this is only human reasoning, remember after Gabriel visited Zacharias and told him that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a child there is no mention that Gabriel told Elizabeth neither is there any mention of Zacharias telling her. Biblical writers often leave unimportant detail to the common sense of the reader, (i.e. Luke would take it for granted that everyone reading the story would naturally assume that Zacharias would

tell his wife all that Gabriel had said) this same principal would apply with the story of Mary. If every detail of every story was recorded the Bible would be a hundred times thicker than it is today, most stories only record enough to convey what is important to the story or the message. Joseph was a compassionate man, we know this because under the law he could of had Mary stoned since prior to the angel appearing he believed she had committed adultery which was punishable by stoning, but Joseph treated her kindly and did not want to put her to shame so he intended to put her away quietly (i.e., without telling anyone) (Matt. 1:18-25).

FOOTNOTE

Should anyone have difficulty believing in the virgin birth consider the following list which highlights seven living creatures that all have the appearance of man yet they all come from a different origin.

1. Adam was made from the dust of the earth and enlivened by the breath of God.
2. Eve was made from part of Adam while he was in a deep sleep.
3. Cain was born by natural sexual reproduction.
4. Isaac born to a woman long past menopause and a very aged man.
5. John the Baptist was born to a woman that was barren and very old.
6. Angels appear like men, but are immortal and have much greater powers.
7. Jesus was born of a virgin without the intervention of a man.

If it was possible to gather all these seven people in one room, look, talk and examine them all as we might, they would nevertheless all have the appearance of a man, but each has a very different origin. Therefore, it should not be difficult to conceive that God through His creative power by the Holy Spirit created the seed within Mary or altered a cell or some genetic information as modern scientist can do today to begin the birth process. Added to this facts it should not be difficult to accept the virgin Birth when we consider that today man is able to manipulate the genes and clone a creature from the DNA of another creature, scientists can artificially impregnate a virgin so that she gives birth and technically it is within the grasp of science that a dead person may also be cloned, more than this we know God is so creative He is able to produce creatures that look, eat, talk, sleep and walk like man in at least seven different ways and we cannot tell the difference between them. Then added to all of these is the fact that while the earth was void and in darkness God spoke and creation came into existence how simple for God to speak the word to Mary and bring that word also into existence.

For further information see the following title:

- Virgin Birth and the Promised Seed of Abraham and David

In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.