

Luke 3:1-6

Introduction: This paragraph jumps ahead from 2:42 about 22 years, making this 29 AD. John is now nearly 35 years old. Luke clearly shows Theophilus that Christianity began in public (cf. Acts 26:26).

The historical setting of the ministries of John and Jesus—3:1-2a

1) Politically

a) Nationally—¹ *Now in the fifteenth year of the rule [AD 14-37] of Tiberius Caesar,*

i) He began reigning as co-Caesar with Augustus in AD 12. He began his solo reign in AD 14.

ii) How ironic that millions no longer recognize his name, but they recognize the names of Jesus, John the Baptizer, and Pontius Pilate!

b) Regionally

i) Southern area around Jerusalem—*Pontius Pilate being ruler [AD 26-36] of Judea,*

(1) Pilate was a Roman prefect, in charge of collecting taxes and keeping peace.

ii) Near north—*Herod (Antipas) being tetrarch [4 BC – AD 39] of Galilee,* (cf. 3:19; 23:6-12) (he was a loyal puppet of Rome)

iii) Further north—*and his (half-) brother (Herod) Philip being tetrarch [4 BC – AD 34] of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis,*

iv) Furthest north—*and Lysanias being tetrarch [?? – AD 37] of Abilene,*

c) Gentile domination does not overthrow God's eternal purpose. When Luke wrote this book, all these leaders had passed into the fog of history.

2) Religiously

a) ² *during the time of the high priesthood of Annas [AD 6-15] and Caiaphas (son-in-law of Annas) [AD 18-36],* (cf. John 18:13-27)

b) This was the 30th year of Jubilee according to the Jewish calendar.

God intervenes in the course of human affairs—3:2b

1) John the prophet—*the word [ῥῆμα] of God came to [ἐπί] John the son of Zachariah, in the wilderness* (desert; cf. 1:80). (cf. 1:76-77)

a) Cf. Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Zechariah 1:1

2) John's ministry of the Word is a fulfillment of God's promises through Isaiah and God's promises to Zechariah through Gabriel (Luke 1).

What was John's response to receiving this revelation from God?—3:3-6

1) John's ministry—3:3

a) The location—3:3a ³ *And he went into all the surrounding region of the Jordan,*

b) The message—3:3b *proclaiming [κηρύσσω] an immersion [βάπτισμα] of repentance [μετάνοια] in view of [εἰς] the forgiveness [ἄφεσις] of sins [ἁμαρτία],*

i) To participate in this baptism was a recognition of the need for God's

- forgiveness with a sense that one needed to live differently as a response to it. (NET Bible)
- ii) Genuine repentance produces a life lived with a sense of responsibility before a sovereign God. (Bock, 1:287) The results of repentance are illustrated in the immersion.
 - iii) John's immersion represented for its precross Israelite audience a commitment to a new approach to God resulting in a life of fruitfulness for God and expectation of the coming Messiah. To submit to this immersion is to confess one's commitment to this perspective. (Bock, 1:289)
- 2) What is the authoritative source for such behavior? [from Isaiah 40:3-5]
- a) The Biblical basis for such a message—3:4 ⁴ *as it is written* [pf. pass. ptc. γράφω] *in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make ready the route [ὁδός] of the Lord, make His paths [τρίβος] level [εὐθός].*
 - i) Cf. the early name for Christians—Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22
 - ii) Cf. Acts 18:25-26
 - b) Metaphors of repentance—3:5 (All the obstacles to His approach are to be removed.)
 - i) The need for humility—⁵ *Every ravine will be filled in, and every mountain and hill will be lowered* [ταπεινώω],
 - ii) The need for righteousness—*and the crooked [σκολιός] will be made straight [εὐθός] and the uneven [τραχύς] roads level [λείος];*
 - iii) The heart that turns in repentance is to express itself in concrete acts and await God's deliverance. (Bock, 1:293)
 - c) The result of repentance—3:6 ⁶ *and all flesh* (humanity, all nations) *will see the salvation [σωτήριον] of God (the Father)."*
 - i) Luke omits the phrase: "the glory of Yahweh will be revealed". God's glory is manifest in the salvation of all flesh. (cf. Acts 28:25-28)
 - ii) God's salvation is seen in the baptism in the Spirit (cf. 3:15-16) that Christ brings. (Bock, 1:293)

Take-home truth: Genuine repentance involves a change of mind that in turn changes the way one lives before God and people.