

'On the road'

Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

Luke is up front about his intention in writing his gospel record: it was to help a man called Theophilus to have the confidence to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He wanted to bolster the embryonic faith of this man in the face of both the hostility he was likely to face and the adversity which almost certainly would be his experience.

The aim of this study of Luke's gospel, therefore, is to help us all "*fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*", to the end that we "*run with perseverance the race marked out for us*" (see Heb.12.1-2)

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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3. Luke 3.1-38 [w/b Sunday 4th February 2018]

“.. and all people will see God’s salvation”

Having highlighted in 1.5-2.39 just why Jesus’ birth was so remarkable, Luke’s concern in 2.40-3.38 is to point up three major reasons why there were great and growing expectations before Jesus began His ministry - His growing years (2.40-52), His outrider’s words (3.1-22), and His family roots (3.23-38). This study looks at the latter two reasons for that expectancy.

The last time God had spoken into the life of Israel had been some 400 years previously, through the prophet Malachi: His final word had been the declaration that the coming of the Messiah would be preceded by the ministry of an Elijah-like figure (Mal.4.5ff). John’s ministry bore all the hallmarks of just that!

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! Key questions which you should certainly be covered are perhaps questions 3, 4 & 6. Do try as always to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. **Read Luke 3.1-3.** Luke carefully earths this narrative in its historical context. *[The high priest Annas was still alive (and still a force to be reckoned with). He had been deposed by the Roman governor, but saw to it that his son-in-law Caiaphas took on the role - hence the unusual phenomenon of there being 2 high priests at the same time.]*

Why do you think Luke provides such an extensive note of the 'power brokers' of the day?

What was the significance of the 'country around the Jordan' being the context of John's ministry?

2. Read Luke 3.4-6. The Old Testament had anticipated that the coming of the Messiah would be preceded by an 'outrider': it is with this promised 'outrider' that John is here identified.

What does God's salvation entail, according to the prophecy of Isaiah?

We've already read of a man declaring, *'My eyes have seen Your salvation'* (2.30): when and how did *you* see God's salvation?

3. Read Luke 3.7-14. John was uncompromising in both the message he preached and the manner of his preaching!

Why do you think he addressed them as he did (*'You brood of vipers!'*)?

How does John's insistence that there must be 'the fruits of repentance' not result in a legalistic message?

4. **Read Luke 3.15-18.** Luke explains how John underlined his role as merely a 'forerunner', preparing the way for the Lord, and pointing his hearers to the One who was coming.

An expectancy had been created in the hearts of the people (v.15): what three truths did John underline about Jesus as the One who was coming?

Read **vv.7-18** again: how would you summarise John's message, and what do you think constitutes it as 'the good news'?

5. **Read Luke 3.19-20.** John's uncompromising preaching clearly had a powerful applicatory edge! Here Luke records how John applied to message to Herod.

What was John hoping to achieve in rebuking Herod as he did?

Where *rebuke* is needed in today's society, how do you think it is best given?

6. Read Luke 3.21-22. Luke records not only the preaching of John, but also his baptism of Jesus: as John's message had pointed to the significance of Jesus, so too did the circumstances surrounding Jesus being baptized by John.

If John's baptism was 'a baptism of repentance' (v.3), why was Jesus baptised?

What two circumstances at the time of Jesus being baptized are highlighted by Luke?

Why do you think Luke draws attention to them?

7. Read Luke 3.23-38. This genealogy differs in places from that in Matthew 1: there are various possible reasons for this - it may well be, for instance, that Luke traces Jesus' genealogy through Mary whereas Matthew traces it through Joseph.

Why do you think Luke includes such a lengthy genealogy as this at this point in his gospel narrative?