

3/23/14

The Ministry of John The Baptist

Lk. 3:1-14

About fourteen years have passed between the end of chapter two and the beginning of chapter three and the words of Gabriel are about to be fulfilled. * “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Lk. 1:15-17

John broke the 400 year silence with the same message of the last prophet Malachi, “repentance”, in view of the sin and the Coming Messiah.

We want to look at the inception of the ministry of John the Baptist, which is characterized by three things: Lk. 3:1-14

- I.** The ministry of John was historically documented. vs. 1-2
- II.** The ministry of John was Scripturally authenticated. vs. 3-6
- III.** The ministry of John was heavenly initiated. vs. 7-14

I. The ministry of John was historically documented. vs. 1-2

- A.** The Physician Luke was a good historian and has carefully associated the events of his gospel in relation to secular dating.
 - 1.** He began by giving us the historical setting for the angel Gabriel’s visitation to Zacharias. Lk. 1:5
 - a.** They occurred in the days of Herod the Great, the king of Judea, a very evil man, an Edomite, a descendent of Esau, who reigned from 37-4 B.C.
 - b.** The title of King of Judea was conferred to him by the Roman Senate in 40 B. C. by the influence of Antonius and Octavius.
 - 2.** He associated Zacharias course to burn incense with the days of Herod the Great.
 - a.** He was a priest of division of Abijah, the eighth. vs. 5c-d
 - b.** His wife Elizabeth was of the priestly line of Aaron. vs. 5e-f, 8-9
 - 3.** He gave us the decree of Caesar Augustus for all the world to be tax is used to date the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Lk. 2:1-5

* “And it came to pass in those days”, are the days of Herod. Lk. 2:1; 1:5a

- a. The beginning of the census is dated while Quirinius or Cyrianius was governor of Syria. vs. 2
 - b. Critics tried to fault the Scriptures, but archaeological evidence proved him to be governor twice, 4 B.C. , 6 A. D.
- B.** The physician Luke related the ministry of John the Baptist to six contemporary figures, marking the importance and genuineness of John’s ministry. vs. 1-2
1. The date is the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. vs. 1a
 - a. His name always appears in this order, never the reverse.
 - b. He reigned for two years conjointly with Augustus his father-in-law, from 11-12 A. D.
 - c. Augustus died on August 19, 14 A. D. , if the two years are included Tiberius Caesar fifteenth year would be 26 A. D. , if not it is 28-29 A. D. , giving us the date for the ministry of John.
 2. The second person is Pontius Pilate, a contemporary at this time. vs. 1b
 - a. He was governor “hegemoneuo”, procurator of Judea.
 - b. He was governor till 36 A. D. when he was deposed before Passover.
 - c. He is the one who judged Jesus.

- d. The critics argued that their was never anyone by the name of Pilot as the Bible declared, yet as they unearth Caesarea on the Mediterranean, they found in the theatre the name of Pontius Pilot on one of the seats.
 - e. We will see a copy of it on our tour in two months when we go there.
3. The third person is Herod Antipas, one of the three sons of Herod the Great, who died in 4 B. C. vs. 1c
 - a. He was tetrarch “tetrarcho”, which means a forth part.
 - b. He ruled Galilee from 4 B. C-39 A. D.
 - c. He was a contemporary when John began his ministry.
 4. The fourth person is his brother Philip. vs. 1d
 - a. He also was a tetrarch “tetrarcho”, ruling a forth part.
 - b. He ruled over Iturea and Trachonitis, the territory north-east of the Sea of Galilee, Iturea extended east and south from Mount Hermon from Damascus and Trachonitis lay still farther to the east, east of Jordan, north of Perea.
 - c. He ruled from 4 B. C.- 33-34 A. D. , a contemporary during John’s ministry.
 - d. He beautified Banius and named it Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, in honor of Caesar.

- e. Legend saying the god Pan was born out of the cave on one of the headwaters of the Jordan, we get pantheism from it, all is god.
 - f. Jesus took His disciples and asked the who men said He was, then asked them and Peter said, “You are the Son of God”, there in the place of the gods and Caesars was established.
5. The fifth person is Lysianias tetrarch of Abilene. vs. 1e
- a. He ruled a fourth part also, the territory lay on the eastern region of Antilebanon northwest of Damascus.
 - b. At his death his part was joined to that of Philip forming the domain of King Agrippa the First, then Agrippa the Second. Acts 12:1-23; 25:13-32
 - c. Not much is known of Lysianias, the critics charged Luke with a terrible error, but an inscription was found on the site of Abila to the dedication of a temple, “Nymphaios, a freedman of Lysanias, the tetrarch.” Lenski
 - f. The fourth brother was Archelaus, he is not mentioned, but he ruled Judea, Samaria and Edom, a bad king.
 - * Remember an angel to Joseph in Egypt to return to the land of Israel for all had dies who sough His life and Matthew tells us, “But when he heard that **Archelaus** was

- reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.” Matt. 2:22
6. The sixth involves two people, Annas and Ciaphas. vs. 2a
- a. There was never two High Priest at the same time, between 37 B. C. and 26 A. D. there were 29 High Priests
 - b. Annas the rightful priest from 7 A. D. to 14 A. D. , deposed A. D. 15 or 16.
 - c. He was out of office, but he was succeeded by four of his sons.
 - d. Caiaphas was son-in-law to Annas and was appointed High Priests by Rome, as a figure-head and was deposed in early 36 A. D.
 - e. Both were contemporaries alive when John began his ministry 28-29 A. D.
- C. The physician Luke declared that at this particular time in history God called John to begin his ministry. vs. 2b
- 1. The word of the Lord came to John.
 - a. God spoke directly to John to start his office of forerunner of the Messiah.
 - 1) The word “rhema” the utterance or voice of God.
 - 2) The word came “ginomai” is aorist, merely historical, at this time.

- b. John is referred to the son of Zacharias, I am sure for all who had been contemplating the nature and future of the child at his dedication. Lk. 1:65-66
* John was 6 months older than Jesus.
- c. John at the time was in the wilderness.
 - 1) The deserted areas down by the Jordan, in contrast to the city.
 - 2) Luke told us, “So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.” Lk. 1:80
- 2. The other gospels gives us supplemental information.
 - a. Matthew and Mark say the wilderness of Judea. Matt. 3:1; Mk. 1:4
 - b. Matthew tells us John was clothed in camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Matt. 3:4, Mk 1:6
 - c. Some have attempted to identify John with the Essenes, down in the Dead Sea area due to the acetic life but it is mere speculation and incongruous with what they believed.
- 8. John appears as a sudden fire in the wilderness.
* Parallel passages. Matt. 3:1-12. Mk. 1:1-8, Lk. 3:1-18, Jn. 1:6-8, 15-28

Illustration

The date of the First Coming of Jesus was given by God to the Jews, but they missed it, as He rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. Matt. 21

* The starting point is the command Artaxerxes to Nehemiah on March 14, 445 B. C. projected forward 483 years or 173, 880 days, to the day, brings us to Sunday the 6th, of April 32 A. D.

Application

1. The Old Testament is filled with specific dates of the prophets proclamations according to the reign of a king and other contemporary kings.

* “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, unto whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.” Jer. 1:1-3

2. The number of years of captivity were prophecies and fulfilled to the day.

a. “For thus says the LORD: After **seventy years** are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.” Jer. 29:10

b. “In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the

years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish **seventy years** in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Dan. 9:2

- a. “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2Tim. 3:16-17
- c. “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2Pet. 1:19-21

The ministry of John was historically documented, being very reliable!

II. The ministry of John was Scripturally authenticated. vs. 3-6

- A. John went throughout the areas of the Jordan River. vs. 3
 1. John went into all the region around Jordan. vs. 3a
 - a. The prophet John moved about periodically through the region.

- 1) The region of Bethabara or Bethany. Jn. 1:28
- 2) The region of Aenon, near Salim. Jn. 3:23
- b. The region around the Jordan is the area the Jordan flows down to the Dead Sea.
 - 1) The elevation goes from 600 feet below sea level to 1385.
 - 2) The Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth, the closest place to hell.
2. John went about preaching the gospel. vs. 3b
 - a. The word preaching “kerusso”, means to proclaim or announce as a herald.
 - 1) A herald was hired by the state or kings to make official proclamations.
 - 2) The herald was given the message, it was not his own.
 - 3) The herald was vested the authority, it was not his own.
 - 4) The herald was not responsible for the obedience to the proclamation, only to proclaim the message.
 - b. The proclamation was a baptism of repentance.
 - 1) The article “a” is not in the Greek text stressing the meaning of the three nouns. Lenski

- 2) The message was a baptism that was marked by repentance, “repentance baptism”.
 - 3) The preaching was clear, repentance alone met the condition for this baptism.
 - 4) Repentance “metanoia”, means a change of mind” about one’s guilt and sin by a change of heart, distinct from regret. 2Cor. 7:9-10
- c. The outcome or result was the forgiveness of a persons sins.
- 1) The word remission “aphesis” means to release, from the root “aphiemi”, to send away or depart.
 - 2) The forgiveness was based on the proclamation of the Gospel that Jesus was the Messiah and Lamb of God to die for our sins. Jn. 1:29
 - 3) The word sin “hamartia”, means to miss the mark, perfection!
 - 4) “There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” Jn. 1:6-9

- 4) “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” Matt. 3:5-6; Mk. 1:5
- B.** John was fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy. vs. 4-6
1. He identified himself as the forerunner of the Messiah. vs. 4
 - a. John quoted the book of Isaiah the Prophet, “As it is written in the book the words of Isaiah.” vs. 4a
 - 1) The text is Is. 40:3-4.
 - 2) The two other synoptic gospel also quote it. Matt. 3:3; Mk. 1:3
 - 3) John also quotes Isaiah. Jn. 1:23
 - b. John identified his himself with the prophesy, “saying: the voice crying in the wilderness saying.” vs. 4b-c
 2. He indicated the urgency of his message. vs. 4d-5
 - a. John proclaimed the Messiah, the King was coming, “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.” vs. 4d-e
 - 1) The LORD was the covenant name of God, Yahweh, the One to save them from their sins.
 - 2) The language and imagery is of a person of royalty coming and the people make his paths straight

“euthus”, level, understanding the meaning was moral and spiritual, to prepare their hearts.

- b.** John proclaimed all manner of sin was going to be confronted and have to be dealt in relation to the Messiah. vs. 5
 * “Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth.”
- 1) The imagery is cultural and marks again the coming of king to repair the roads so he could have a smooth and comfortable journey.
 - 2) Yet the various defects on the roads could never be remedied to perfection, in fact it was an impossible task and that is the point.
 - 3) The proclamation is that the Messiah is coming to accomplish this , it is in the future tense “shall be”.
 - 4) The valley to be filled, mountain brought low, the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough, referring to the sins and sinfulness of man that Jesus was not only going to forgive, but give the ability to live a life pleasing to God by repentance through the new birth.
- 3.** He included a passage of Isaiah the other gospel did not quote. “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” vs. 6

- a. The tense again is future. Is. 40:5
- b. The promise included the Gentiles.
- c. The four-hundred year of silence had been broken and the new economy was about to begin.
 * “The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.” Is. 52:10

Illustration

Jesus declared, “For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Lk. 7:28

Application

1. This is what is lacking in the pulpits of America, preaching of repentance from sin, it is killing us.
 - a. We have mixed psychology with the gospel from the 70’s believing Christian Psychology through Dr. Dobson ending up with self-centered and entitled believers.
 - b. We have preached a positive confession of faith, focused on financial prosperity and we have raised worldly believers.
 - c. We have bought into Church Growth , the intellectual self-sufficiency to grow and run the church as a corporation, so we have wealthy and big corporate managers that are worshipped by believers.

* “Professing to be **wise**, they became **fools**.” Rom. 1:22

d. We have embraced the “Seeker-Friendly Movement and “Emergent Movement”, so we are rejecting the word of God, the proclamation of sin and repentance, teaching believers to simply be involved and help this world to be a better place.

* “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 1Tim. 4:1-5

2. The promise of God for our sins that we repent from is very clear.

- a. They are cast as far as east from the west. Ps. 103:12
- b. They are place behind his back, unable to see seen. Is. 38:17c
- c. They are cat into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19

d. They will not be remembered no more. Is. 43:25; Heb. 8:12; 10:17

- 3. The only way to God has been signed in blood.
 - a. There is only one way. Jn. 14:6
 - b. There is only one name. Acts 4:12
 - c. There is only one mediator. 1Tim. 2:5

The ministry of John was Scripturally authenticated, being very credible!

III. The ministry of John was heavenly initiated. vs. 7-14

- A. John declared an uncompromising message to the unrepentant in God’s authority. vs. 7-9
 - 1. He rebuked sharply those who were insincere about repentance. vs. 7
 - a. John confronted them with strong language, “Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers!” vs. 7a-b
 - 1) The message was clear, they were children of the wicked one, Satan.
 - 2) Cunning, poisonous and deceptive, hypocritical and treacherous.
 - 3) Matthew tells us that John told this to the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to his baptism, warning them of the judgment. Matt. 3:7

- 4) All came confessing their sins we are told by Matthew. Matt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5
- b. John cautioned them, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” vs. 7c
- 1) The phrase, “who warned you to flee” is the aorist that Satan suggested that these hypocrites can actually escape God’s wrath.
 - 2) The wrath “orge” of God is the natural disposition of God against all sin, due to His perfect holiness that demands punishment.
 - 3) The final judgment refers to the Second Coming and the White Throne Judgment, it is present active, “the coming wrath”.
2. He demanded evidence of repentance in their lives. vs. 8
- a. John told them they were deceiving themselves, “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” vs. 8a
 - 1) The word worthy “axios”, means having equal or corresponding weight.
 - 2) Their declaration that they had repented had to have a corresponding life-style.
 - b. John told them their national heritage did not exempt them from repentance, it meant nothing, “and do not begin to

- say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’” vs. 8b-c
- 1) Abraham and father are emphatic.
 - 2) The Jews believed God created the Gentiles to kindle the fire of hell.
 - 3) The Jews had become self-deceived through entitlement.
- c. John told them God was the only One able to turn stony hearts to hearts for God, “For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” vs. 8d
- 1) Their hearts had become hard as stone that only God can brake.
 - 2) Just as God was about to do to the Gentiles, considered stones, dead.
3. He denounced those who refused to repent to the wrath of God’s judgment. vs. 9
- a. Rejecting God’s love and grace has severe consequences, “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.” vs. 9a
 - 1) The word now “ede” means already and is emphatic.
 - 2) The axe with the article points to divine judgment.
 - b. Rejecting God’s love and grace means eternal punishment, “Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” vs. 9b

- 1) Lenski says the present tense of “cut down” and “thrown into” are indicative present passives, referring to a timeless present.
- 2) The belief that a person just ceases to exist after death is unbiblical, all will live eternally in heaven or the Lake of Fire.

B. John declared a clear message to the repentant by God’s authority prompting them to ask the right questions. vs. 10-14

1. The average person in the crowd are recorded first. vs. 10-11
 - a. The question, “So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?”. vs. 10
 - b. The answer, “He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” vs. 11
 - 1) They were to be generous and compassionate toward the poor and less fortunate as believers!
 - 2) Not to be saved, but as evidence of salvation!
 - 3) They are imperative commands.
2. The tax collectors in the crowd are recorded second. vs. 12
 - a. The question, “Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to

him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” vs. 14

- b. The answer, “And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.” vs. 13
 - 1) Tax collectors were the most despised and considered traitor by helping Rome oppressed them.
 - 2) Rome would contract the job out requiring a set amount and the publicans could keep anything over, so often they abused and power robbing the people.
 - 3) John told them to be honest and fair to the people, as believers.
 - 4) These are also imperative commands.
3. The soldiers in the crowd are recorded third. vs. 14-15
 - a. The question, “Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” vs. 14a-c
 - * The participle rather than the noun conveys they serve voluntarily as soldiers, being mercenaries. Lenski
 - b. The answer, “So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.” vs. 14d-f
 - 1) Soldiers intimidated “diaseio” putting fear in people to extort money or property.

- 2) Soldiers wages “opsonion” were not always paid in money but rations, the saying, “a person is worth their salt”, came from soldiers being paid in salt.
- 3) No imperative commands.

Illustration

A man must know three things in order to be steadfast, unmovable and courageous, he must know he is called, anointed and sent by God!

Application

1. The message of the gospel must be preached to all, knowing God gave His Son for all. Jn. 3:16
 - a. Therefore all have the potential to be saved.
 - b. Therefore all will have at least one change before they die to be saved.
 - c. Therefore no one will ever be able to blame God that He sent them to hell without giving them a chance to choose to be saved or not!
2. The Scriptural history of God’s dealings with man is a witness to man’s sinfulness.
 - a. God gave Adam and Eve a chance to repent and they chose to repent.
 - b. God gave a chance to Cain to repent, but he chose not to repent.
 - c. God gave a chance to Israel to repent, but she chose not to and went into captivity.
 - d. God gave Judas Iscariot chance after chance to repent and he did not repent.

* “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “*and* not that he should turn from his ways and live?” Jer. 18:23

3. The person who repents demonstrates by their manner of life they have been transformed.
 - a. Fornicator don’t fornicate any more.
 - b. Drunkards don’t drink any more.
 - c. Drug users don’t use drugs any more.
 - d. Liars don’t lie any more.
 - e. Gossipers don’t gossip any more.
- * “faith without works is dead. Ja. 2:14-20

The ministry of John was based on heavenly initiated, being very acceptable!

Conclusion

The inception of the ministry of John the Baptist is characterized by three things:

- I. The ministry of John was historically documented, being very reliable!
- II. The ministry of John was Scripturally authenticated, being very credible!
- III. The ministry of John was heavenly initiated, being very acceptable!