CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Luke Chapter 3 —

The Ministry of John and the Baptism of Jesus

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Luke Chapter 3 moves forward about thirty years.

The baby in the manger is now a grown man.

John, the child of Zechariah and Elizabeth, is now a prophet in the wilderness.

For centuries, Israel had heard no prophet's voice.

Now the word of God comes again.

John calls the nation to repent and to prepare for the Lord.

He tells people what real repentance looks like in daily life.

He points away from himself to One far greater.

Then Jesus is baptized, the heavens open, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks.

Luke closes the chapter with a genealogy that traces Jesus all the way back to Adam, the son of God.

The chapter moves through five movements:

- John the Baptist Prepares the Way (verses 1–6).
- The Call to Repentance (verses 7–14).
- John Points to the Greater One (verses 15–20).
- The Baptism of Jesus (verses 21–22).
- The Genealogy of Jesus (verses 23–38).

The central truth of Luke 3 is:

True repentance prepares the heart for Jesus, the beloved Son of God, who was anointed by the Spirit, approved by the Father, and came as a true man from Adam's line to save all people.

I. IN THE FIFTEENTH YEAR

Luke 3:1 — The Rulers of the World

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene—”

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.”

About A.D. 28 or 29.

Luke, the careful historian, sets the date.

“Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea.”

The man who would one day sentence Jesus.

“Herod was tetrarch of Galilee.”

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great.

A tetrarch ruled part of a kingdom.

Luke lists the powerful men of the world.

But God's word would not come to any of them.

Cross References

Matthew 3:1

> In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea.

Mark 1:4

> John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching that people should be baptized as a sign that they had turned from their sins to be forgiven.

Acts 4:27

> In this very city, Herod and Pontius Pilate joined with the nations and with the people of Israel to oppose Jesus, Your holy servant, the One You chose and anointed.

Spiritual Principle

God's work takes place in real history, under real rulers.

Key Truth

The world had many rulers, but God had one messenger.

II. THE WORD OF GOD CAME TO JOHN

Luke 3:2 — In the Wilderness

“during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.”

“During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.”

Annas had been high priest and still held great influence.

Caiaphas, his son-in-law, held the office.

“The word of God came to John.”

Not to Caesar.

Not to Pilate.

Not to the high priests.

The word of God came to a man in the desert.

“Son of Zechariah.”

The promise of Luke 1 was being fulfilled.

Cross References

Matthew 3:1

> John the Baptist came and began preaching in the Judean wilderness.

Mark 1:4

> John was in the desert, baptizing people and telling them to turn from sin.

Jeremiah 1:2

> The Lord's message came to Jeremiah in the thirteenth year that Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah.

Spiritual Principle

God speaks to whom He chooses, not to whom the world honors.

Key Truth

Power sat in palaces, but God's word went to the wilderness.

III. A BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

Luke 3:3 — For the Forgiveness of Sins

“He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

“All the country around the Jordan.”

The river where Israel had crossed into the Promised Land.

“Preaching a baptism of repentance.”

Repentance means a change of mind and heart that leads to a change of life.

Baptism was the outward sign of this inner turning.

“For the forgiveness of sins.”

Forgiveness is the goal.

People must turn from sin to receive God's mercy.

Cross References

Matthew 3:1

> John began to preach in the wilderness of Judea.

Mark 1:4

> John preached that people should be baptized to show they had changed their hearts, so their sins could be forgiven.

Acts 19:4

> Paul said, “John's baptism was for people turning from sin. He told them to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

Spiritual Principle

Forgiveness begins with genuine repentance.

Key Truth

Turning to God means turning from sin.

IV. A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

Luke 3:4 — Prepare the Way

“As it is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.”

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness.”

John was only a voice.

The message mattered more than the messenger.

“Prepare the way for the Lord.”

In ancient times, roads were repaired before a king arrived.

John was preparing hearts for the King.

“Make straight paths for Him.”

Remove whatever stands in His way.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:3

> Someone is shouting: “Make a road through the wilderness for the Lord. Build a straight highway across the desert for our God.”

Matthew 3:3

> John is the one Isaiah the prophet spoke about: “There is a voice calling in the desert, ‘Get the road ready for the Lord. Make His paths straight.’”

Mark 1:3

> A voice cries out in the wilderness: “Prepare the Lord's road. Straighten out the paths for Him.”

Spiritual Principle

Hearts must be prepared to receive the Lord.

Key Truth

John was a voice; Jesus is the Word.

V. EVERY VALLEY FILLED

Luke 3:5 — Crooked Made Straight

“Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.”

“Every valley shall be filled in.”

The low places lifted.

The discouraged and humble encouraged.

“Every mountain and hill made low.”

The proud brought down.

“The crooked roads shall become straight.”

Dishonest lives made right.

“The rough ways smooth.”

Hard hearts softened.

This is what repentance does in the heart.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:4

> Every low valley will be raised, and every mountain and hill will be leveled. The bumpy ground will become flat, and the rough places will become a plain.

Isaiah 42:16

> I will lead the blind on roads they have never known. I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.

Isaiah 45:2

> I will go ahead of you and level the mountains. I will break down bronze gates and cut through iron bars.

Spiritual Principle

Repentance levels pride and lifts the humble.

Application

What crooked path in your life needs to be made straight?

VI. ALL PEOPLE WILL SEE

Luke 3:6 — God's Salvation

“And all people will see God's salvation.’”””

“And all people.”

Only Luke continues the quotation this far.

He wants us to see that the gospel is for everyone.

“Will see God's salvation.”

Simeon held God's salvation in his arms.

Now it would be revealed to the world.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:5

> The glory of the Lord will be seen, and all humanity will see it together.

Isaiah 52:10

> The Lord will show His holy power to every nation, and the whole earth will see our God's salvation.

Psalm 98:3

> The farthest corners of the earth have seen how our God rescues.

Spiritual Principle

God's salvation is for all people.

Key Truth

No nation, race, or class is left out of God's offer.

VII. BROOD OF VIPERS

Luke 3:7 — The Coming Wrath

“John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

“You brood of vipers!”

Strong words.

Like snakes fleeing a field fire.

“Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

Some came only to escape judgment.

They wanted the ritual without the change.

John would not offer cheap comfort.

Cross References

Matthew 3:7

> When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he said, “You family of snakes! Who told you to run from the punishment that is coming?”

Matthew 12:34

> You children of snakes! How can you say anything good when you are evil? The mouth speaks what overflows from the heart.

Matthew 23:33

> You are snakes, the children of deadly snakes! How do you think you will get away from the judgment of hell?

Spiritual Principle

True repentance is more than escaping punishment.

Spiritual Warning

Religious ritual without a changed heart does not save.

VIII. FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE

Luke 3:8 — We Have Abraham as Our Father

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Real repentance shows itself.

Changed lives prove changed hearts.

“We have Abraham as our father.”

Some trusted in their family line.

This was a warning about trusting heritage instead of God.

The same danger exists today for anyone who trusts a Christian family, a church background, or religious tradition.

“Out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

God does not need anyone's pedigree.

He can create faith where there was none.

Cross References

Matthew 3:8

> Show by the way you live that you have truly changed your hearts.

Matthew 3:9

> Do not think you can tell yourselves, “Abraham is our father.” I tell you, God can make children for Abraham from these rocks.

John 8:39

> They answered, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said, “If you were truly Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did.”

Spiritual Principle

Religious heritage cannot replace a personal relationship with God.

Key Truth

God has children, not grandchildren.

IX. THE AXE AT THE ROOT

Luke 3:9 — Every Tree Without Good Fruit

“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.””

“The axe is already at the root.”

Judgment is near.

Not just a trimming of branches.

The root itself.

“Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down.”

Fruitless lives face judgment.

Time to repent is now.

Cross References

Matthew 3:10

> The axe is ready to cut the trees down at the roots. Every tree that fails to bear good fruit will be chopped down and burned.

Matthew 7:19

> Any tree that grows bad fruit gets chopped down and burned up.

John 15:6

> Whoever does not stay joined to Me is tossed aside like a dead branch that withers. People pick up branches like that and throw them into the fire to burn.

Spiritual Principle

God looks for fruit in our lives.

Spiritual Warning

The time to repent is now, not later.

X. WHAT THEN SHOULD WE DO?

Luke 3:10 — The Crowd's Question

“The crowd asked, “What then should we do?””

This is the right question.

John's words had reached their hearts.

They did not argue.

They asked how to change.

Repentance is practical.

Cross References

Acts 2:37

> When the people heard this, they felt deeply troubled and asked Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

James 2:15

> Suppose a brother or sister has no clothes and no food for the day.

Isaiah 58:7

> Share your food with the hungry, bring homeless poor people into your house, and when you see someone without clothes, give them clothes.

Spiritual Principle

A convicted heart asks, “What should I do?”

Key Truth

Real repentance looks for real change.

XI. SHARE WITH THE ONE WHO HAS NONE

Luke 3:11 — Two Coats

“John replied, “Anyone who has two coats should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.””

“Anyone who has two coats should share.”

Generosity.

Not hoarding.

“With the one who has none.”

Notice the needs of others.

“Anyone who has food should do the same.”

Repentance shows up in how we treat people in need.

It is not just about religious acts.

It is about compassion.

Cross References

Isaiah 58:7

> Give your bread to the hungry and open your home to the poor.

James 2:15

> What if a brother or sister has nothing to wear and nothing to eat?

1 John 3:17

> Suppose someone has plenty and sees a fellow believer going without, yet closes his heart to him. How can God's love be living in that person?

Spiritual Principle

Repentance produces generosity.

Application

What do you have that someone in need could use?

XII. EVEN TAX COLLECTORS

Luke 3:12 — What Should We Do?

“Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?””

“Even tax collectors.”

Tax collectors worked for Rome.

Many cheated their own people.

They were hated and seen as traitors.

“Came to be baptized.”

Yet they came to repent.

No one is too far gone to turn to God.

Cross References

Matthew 21:32

> John came to show you the right way to live, and you did not believe him. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed him.

Luke 19:8

> Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I will give half of what I own to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.”

Ezekiel 33:15

> If the wicked person returns what he took as a pledge, gives back what he stole, and follows the laws that give life, he will surely live.

Spiritual Principle

God's call reaches even the most despised.

Key Truth

No one is beyond the reach of repentance.

XIII. NO MORE THAN REQUIRED

Luke 3:13 — Honest Work

““Don't collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.”

John did not tell them to quit their jobs.

He told them to do their jobs honestly.

Stop cheating.

Stop taking more than is fair.

Repentance changes how we work.

Cross References

Ezekiel 45:9

> Stop your violence and robbery. Do what is fair and right. Stop forcing My people off their land, says the Lord God.

Leviticus 19:13

> Do not cheat your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back a hired worker's pay overnight.

Micah 6:8

> The Lord has told you what is good and what He wants from you: to do what is right, to love being kind, and to walk humbly with your God.

Spiritual Principle

Repentance makes us honest in our work.

Key Truth

Faith is lived out at work, not only at worship.

XIV. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Luke 3:14 — Be Content with Your Pay

“Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.””

“Some soldiers asked him.”

Men with power and weapons.

“Don't extort money.”

Don't use your power to take from others.

“Don't accuse people falsely.”

Don't lie to harm others.

“Be content with your pay.”

Greed is the root of many sins.

Contentment protects the heart.

Cross References

Leviticus 19:13

> Do not take advantage of your neighbor or steal from him.

1 Timothy 6:10

> The love of money leads to every kind of evil. Some people who longed for it have drifted away from the faith and brought a great deal of sorrow on themselves.

Hebrews 13:5

> Do not let your life be controlled by a love for money. Be happy with what you have, because God has promised, “I will not ever walk away from you, and I will not ever desert you.”

Spiritual Principle

Repentance leads to honesty and contentment.

Key Truth

Power must never be used to take advantage of others.

XV. COULD JOHN BE THE MESSIAH?

Luke 3:15 — The People Wondered

“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.”

“The people were waiting expectantly.”

Hope was rising.

“Wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.”

John was powerful and popular.

He could have claimed great things for himself.

But he would not.

Cross References

John 1:19

> This is what John said when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

John 1:20

> He did not refuse to answer. He said plainly, “I am not the Christ.”

Acts 13:25

> As John was finishing his work, he said, “Who do you think I am? I am not the One. But He is coming after me, and I am not worthy to untie His sandals.”

Spiritual Principle

Faithful servants refuse glory that belongs to Christ.

Key Truth

John could have taken the spotlight, but he pointed to Jesus.

XVI. ONE MORE POWERFUL THAN I

Luke 3:16 — The Spirit and Fire

“John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But One more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

“I baptize you with water.”

An outward sign.

“But One more powerful than I will come.”

Jesus.

“The straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

Untying sandals was a slave's task.

John said he was not worthy even of that.

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Jesus would give the Spirit.

Fire speaks of purifying and of judgment.

Cross References

Matthew 3:11

> I baptize you with water to show you have changed your hearts. But the One coming after me is greater than I am. I am not good enough even to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Mark 1:7

> John preached, “After me comes One who is stronger than I am. I am not worthy to bend down and untie His sandals.”

John 1:26

> John answered, “I baptize with water, but among you stands One you do not know.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is far greater than His greatest servant.

Key Truth

John gave water; Jesus gives the Spirit.

XVII. HIS WINNOWING FORK

Luke 3:17 — Wheat and Chaff

“His winnowing fork is in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.””

“His winnowing fork is in His hand.”

Farmers tossed grain in the air.

The heavy wheat fell to the floor.

The light chaff blew away.

“To gather the wheat into His barn.”

Jesus will gather His people.

“But He will burn up the chaff.”

Those with no real life will be separated.

“With unquenchable fire.”

The judgment is serious.

Cross References

Matthew 3:12

> He will come with His winnowing fork to clean the grain. He will put the good grain into His barn, but the useless husks He will burn with a fire that cannot be put out.

Malachi 4:1

> The day is coming that will burn like a furnace. All the proud and evil people will be like straw.

Malachi 3:2

> Who can stand when He comes? He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's strong soap.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus will separate the true from the false.

Spiritual Warning

Judgment is real, and every heart will be tested.

XVIII. HE PROCLAIMED THE GOOD NEWS

Luke 3:18 — Many Other Words

“And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.”

“With many other words.”

Luke gives only a summary.

“John exhorted the people.”

He urged and encouraged them.

“And proclaimed the good news to them.”

Even the warnings were part of the good news.

Repentance prepares people to receive Jesus.

The warning of judgment and the offer of mercy belong together.

Cross References

Acts 13:24

> Before Jesus came, John preached to all the people of Israel that they should be baptized to show they had turned from sin.

Matthew 3:1

> John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness.

Mark 1:4

> John preached about baptism and turning from sin.

Spiritual Principle

Warning and good news go together.

Key Truth

The bad news of sin makes the good news of grace precious.

XIX. JOHN REBUKED HEROD

Luke 3:19 — Herodias, His Brother's Wife

“But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evils he had done,”

“John rebuked Herod the tetrarch.”

John spoke the truth to a powerful ruler.

“Because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife.”

Herod had taken his brother's wife.

God's law forbade it.

“And all the other evils he had done.”

John did not soften God's word for the powerful.

Cross References

Matthew 14:3

> Herod had arrested John, tied him up, and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

Mark 6:17

> Herod himself had sent men to arrest John and put him in prison. He did this because of Herodias, whom he had married though she was his brother Philip's wife.

Leviticus 18:16

> Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife. That would dishonor your brother.

Spiritual Principle

God's truth applies to the powerful as well as the weak.

Key Truth

Faithfulness sometimes means speaking truth that costs us.

XX. LOCKED IN PRISON

Luke 3:20 — Herod Added This

“Herod added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.”

“Herod added this to them all.”

Instead of repenting, Herod added another sin.

“He locked John up in prison.”

The voice of truth was silenced.

But God's work was not stopped.

As John's ministry ended, Jesus' ministry began.

Cross References

Matthew 14:3

Herod had John seized and thrown into prison.

Mark 6:17

Herod ordered John arrested and chained in prison.

Matthew 4:12

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He went back to Galilee.

Spiritual Principle

Rejecting God's rebuke leads to deeper sin.

Spiritual Warning

When confronted with sin, repent instead of silencing the messenger.

XXI. JESUS WAS BAPTIZED TOO

Luke 3:21 — As He Was Praying

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened,”

“When all the people were being baptized.”

Jesus stood with sinners.

“Jesus was baptized too.”

Jesus had no sin to repent of.

Yet He was baptized, identifying Himself with the people He came to save.

“And as He was praying.”

Only Luke tells us Jesus was praying.

Luke shows Jesus praying at every important moment.

“Heaven was opened.”

God was about to speak.

Cross References

Matthew 3:16

> As soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water. At that moment heaven opened, and He saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on Him.

Mark 1:9

> At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized Him in the Jordan River.

John 1:32

> John told this: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and stay on Him.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus identified Himself with sinners to save them.

Key Truth

Heaven opened while Jesus prayed.

XXII. MY BELOVED SON

Luke 3:22 — The Spirit and the Voice

“and 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 Holy Spirit descended on Him.”

Jesus was anointed for His ministry.

“In bodily form like a dove.”

Visible.

Gentle.

Peaceful.

“A voice came from heaven.”

The Father spoke.

“You are My beloved Son.”

Jesus' identity.

“With You I am well pleased.”

The Father's approval, before Jesus had done a single miracle.

Here we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together.

Cross References

Matthew 3:17

> Then a voice from heaven said, “This is My dear Son. He makes Me very glad.”

Mark 1:11

> Then a voice spoke from heaven: “You are My Son, and I love You. You bring Me great joy.”

Isaiah 42:1

> Look at My servant, the One I hold up. I chose Him, and He brings Me joy. I have placed My Spirit upon Him.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the beloved Son, anointed by the Spirit and approved by the Father.

Key Truth

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are revealed together at Jesus' baptism.

XXIII. ABOUT THIRTY YEARS OLD

Luke 3:23 — Thought to Be the Son of Joseph

“Now Jesus Himself was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. He was thought to be the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,”

“About thirty years old.”

The age when priests began to serve.

The age when Joseph began to serve Pharaoh.

The age when David became king.

“He was thought to be the son of Joseph.”

Luke carefully reminds us of the virgin birth.

Jesus was legally Joseph's son, but not his natural son.

“The son of Heli.”

Matthew's genealogy lists Joseph's father as Jacob.

Bible students explain this in different ways.

Many believe Luke traces Mary's line through her father Heli, with Joseph named as his son-in-law.

Others believe Matthew gives the royal legal line while Luke gives the natural family line, or that a family custom such as levirate marriage explains it.

Either way, both Gospels show Jesus as the rightful heir of David.

Cross References

Matthew 1:16

> Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Christ.

Numbers 4:3

> Count all the men from thirty to fifty years old who come to serve at the meeting tent.

Genesis 41:46

> Joseph was thirty years old when he began serving Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Spiritual Principle

God prepares His servants before He sends them.

Key Truth

Thirty years of quiet preparation came before three years of public ministry.

XXIV. THE SON OF MATTHAT

Luke 3:24 — Names Remembered by God

“the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,”

Luke's genealogy goes backward, from Jesus to Adam.

Matthew's goes forward, from Abraham to Jesus.

Most of these names are unknown to us.

But each was a real person.

God knew every one of them.

God was working through each generation to bring the Savior.

Cross References

Matthew 1:15

> Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, and Matthan fathered Jacob.

1 Chronicles 6:1

> Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Ezra 7:1

> Later, while Artaxerxes was king of Persia, Ezra came up. He was the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah.

Spiritual Principle

God remembers names the world forgets.

Key Truth

Ordinary, unknown people were part of God's plan.

XXV. THE SON OF MATTATHIAS

Luke 3:25 — Generation After Generation

“the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,”

More unknown names.

Some of these men lived during the long silent years between the Old and New Testaments.

No prophet spoke.

Yet God was still at work, family by family.

Cross References

Matthew 1:1

> Here is the list of the family of Jesus the Messiah, who came from David, who came from Abraham.

1 Chronicles 1:1

> Adam, Seth, Enosh,

Nehemiah 7:5

> My God put it in my heart to gather the nobles, the officials, and the people to be listed by families. I found the family record of those who had come back first.

Spiritual Principle

God works even in silent seasons.

Key Truth

God was faithful when no one could see Him at work.

XXVI. THE SON OF MAATH

Luke 3:26 — Unknown but Not Forgotten

“the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda,”

These names appear nowhere else in the Bible.

But they are written here, forever, in the family of Jesus.

Your life may not be famous.

But God sees your faithfulness.

Cross References

Matthew 1:1

> Here is the list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, descended from David and Abraham.

1 Chronicles 3:1

> These were David's sons born to him in Hebron. The firstborn was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel.

Ezra 8:1

> These are the heads of the families and those listed with them who came up with me from Babylon while Artaxerxes was king.

Spiritual Principle

God values faithful lives that the world never notices.

Key Truth

Being remembered by God matters more than being famous.

XXVII. ZERUBBABEL

Luke 3:27 — The Return from Exile

“the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,”

“Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel.”

A familiar name.

Zerubbabel led the Jews back from exile in Babylon.

He helped rebuild the temple.

God had preserved David's family through exile.

The line of promise had not been broken.

Cross References

1 Chronicles 3:17

> The descendants of Jehoiachin the captive were Shealtiel his son,

Ezra 3:2

> Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his relatives, began to build the altar of the God of Israel.

Matthew 1:12

> After the people were taken to Babylon, Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, and Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel.

Spiritual Principle

God preserves His promises through the darkest times.

Key Truth

Exile could not break the line that led to Jesus.

XXVIII. THE SON OF MELCHI

Luke 3:28 — Before the Exile

“the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,”

These names reach back before the exile.

They lived during the days of the kings of Judah.

Through good kings and bad, through faithfulness and failure, God kept the family line going.

Cross References

Matthew 1:1

> The record of the family line of Jesus the Christ.

1 Chronicles 1:1

> Adam, Seth, and Enosh were the first in the line.

Ezra 2:1

> These are the people of the province who came back from captivity, those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken away to Babylon.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan continues through every age.

Key Truth

God's purposes outlast every generation.

XXIX. THE SON OF JOSHUA

Luke 3:29 — Familiar Names

“the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,”

“The son of Joshua.”

This is not the famous Joshua who led Israel.

But the name is the same as Jesus in Hebrew.

Joshua means “the Lord saves.”

Families often named children after great heroes of faith.

Cross References

Joshua 1:1

> After Moses the Lord's servant died, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' helper.

Exodus 17:9

> Moses told Joshua, “Pick some men and go fight the Amalekites.”

Matthew 1:1

> This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful families pass on the memory of God's heroes.

Key Truth

The name “the Lord saves” ran through Jesus' family long before Him.

XXX. THE SON OF JUDAH

Luke 3:30 — Names from the Patriarchs

“the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim,”

These are not Jacob's sons, but descendants who carried their names.

Simeon, Judah, and Joseph.

The names of Israel's tribes lived on in its families.

Cross References

Genesis 29:33

> Leah became pregnant again and had a son. She said, “The Lord heard that I was unloved, so He gave me this son too.” She named him Simeon.

Genesis 29:35

> She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” So she named him Judah.

Genesis 49:8

> Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons will bow down to you.

Spiritual Principle

God's people remember their story.

Key Truth

Jesus came from a family that carried Israel's history in its names.

XXXI. THE SON OF NATHAN, THE SON OF DAVID

Luke 3:31 — The Royal Family

“the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,”

“The son of Nathan.”

Matthew traces the line through Solomon, David's royal heir.

Luke traces it through Nathan, another son of David.

Both lines lead back to David.

“The son of David.”

Jesus is the promised Son of David.

God promised David an eternal King from his family.

Cross References

2 Samuel 5:14

> These are the names of the sons born to David in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon.

1 Chronicles 3:5

> These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. Their mother was Bathsheba.

Zechariah 12:12

> The land will mourn, each family by itself: the family of David and their wives, and the family of Nathan and their wives.

Spiritual Principle

God keeps His promise to David.

Key Truth

Jesus is the true Son of David, the eternal King.

XXXII. JESSE, OBED, AND BOAZ

Luke 3:32 — Grace in the Family Line

“the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,”

“The son of Boaz.”

Boaz married Ruth, a woman from Moab.

Ruth was an outsider who came to trust Israel's God.

God's grace welcomed her into the family of the Messiah.

“The son of Nahshon.”

A leader of the tribe of Judah in the days of Moses.

Cross References

Ruth 4:21

> Salmon was the father of Boaz, and Boaz was the father of Obed.

Ruth 4:22

> Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David.

1 Chronicles 2:11

Nahshon was the father of Salmon, and Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Spiritual Principle

God welcomes outsiders into His family.

Key Truth

The family of Jesus includes those who once stood outside.

XXXIII. THE SON OF JUDAH

Luke 3:33 — The Tribe of the King

“the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,”

“The son of Perez.”

Perez was born to Judah and Tamar in a painful and sinful story.

Yet God brought the line of the Messiah through it.

“The son of Judah.”

Jacob had said the scepter would not depart from Judah.

Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Cross References

Ruth 4:18

This is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron.

Ruth 4:19

Hezron was the father of Ram, and Ram was the father of Amminadab.

1 Chronicles 2:9

The sons born to Hezron were Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.

Spiritual Principle

God works His purposes even through broken family stories.

Key Truth

The King came from the tribe of Judah, as promised.

XXXIV. THE SON OF ABRAHAM

Luke 3:34 — The Father of Faith

“the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,”

“Jacob… Isaac… Abraham.”

The fathers of Israel.

God promised Abraham that through his offspring all nations would be blessed.

Jesus is that offspring.

“The son of Terah, the son of Nahor.”

Luke keeps going.

He does not stop at Abraham.

Jesus is not only for Israel.

Cross References

Genesis 21:3

> Abraham named the son Sarah bore him Isaac.

Genesis 25:26

> Then his brother came out, holding on to Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob.

Genesis 11:27

> This is the family history of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Spiritual Principle

God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus.

Key Truth

Through Abraham's Son, the blessing reaches the nations.

XXXV. THE SON OF EBER

Luke 3:35 — Before Abraham

“the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,”

“The son of Peleg.”

In his days, the earth was divided.

“The son of Eber.”

Some believe the word “Hebrew” comes from his name.

These names reach back to the time after the flood.

Cross References

Genesis 11:20

> When Reu was thirty-two years old, he became the father of Serug.

Genesis 11:22

> When Serug was thirty years old, he became the father of Nahor.

Genesis 10:25

> Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg, because in his lifetime the earth was divided.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan stretches back through all of human history.

Key Truth

The story of Jesus begins long before Bethlehem.

XXXVI. THE SON OF NOAH

Luke 3:36 — Through the Flood

“the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,”

“The son of Cainan.”

This Cainan appears in the Greek translation of Genesis that many in Luke's day used, though not in the Hebrew text most Bibles follow.

“The son of Shem, the son of Noah.”

God saved Noah's family through the flood.

Through Noah's son Shem, the line of the Savior continued.

Cross References

Genesis 10:22

> The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

Genesis 5:32

> After Noah was five hundred years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis 9:18

> The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan.

Spiritual Principle

God preserved the line of promise through judgment.

Key Truth

The Savior's family survived the flood by God's grace.

XXXVII. ENOCH AND METHUSELAH

Luke 3:37 — Before the Flood

“the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan,”

“The son of Methuselah.”

The man who lived longer than anyone in the Bible.

“The son of Enoch.”

Enoch walked with God, and God took him.

Even in a dark and wicked world, some walked with God.

Cross References

Genesis 5:21

> When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Methuselah.

Genesis 5:25

> When Methuselah was one hundred eighty-seven years old, he became the father of Lamech.

Genesis 5:15

> When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Jared.

Spiritual Principle

It is possible to walk with God in a dark world.

Key Truth

The line of Jesus included those who walked with God.

XXXVIII. THE SON OF ADAM, THE SON OF GOD

Luke 3:38 — Back to the Beginning

“the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

“The son of Seth.”

Given to Adam and Eve after Abel's death.

“The son of Adam.”

Jesus is truly human, connected to the whole human race.

Not only to Israel.

To every person who has ever lived.

“The son of God.”

Adam was created by God.

And just before this list, the Father said of Jesus, “You are My beloved Son.”

The first Adam failed.

Jesus came as the last Adam to succeed where Adam failed.

The very next chapter shows Him facing temptation and winning.

Cross References

Genesis 5:3

> When Adam was one hundred thirty years old, he had a son who was like him and looked like him, and he named him Seth.

Genesis 4:26

> Seth also had a son, named Enosh. At that time people began to worship the Lord by name.

Romans 5:14

> Yet death ruled from the time of Adam to the time of Moses. Adam was a picture of the One who was going to come.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus came for all people, as a true son of Adam and the true Son of God.

Key Truth

Where the first Adam fell, Jesus came to stand.

XXXIX. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM LUKE 3

1. Repentance Must Be Genuine

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Principle:

True repentance shows itself in the way we live.

2. Heritage Cannot Replace Relationship

“Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’”

Principle:

Religious background cannot take the place of a true, personal relationship with God.

3. Justice, Honesty, and Compassion Matter

“Anyone who has two coats should share with the one who has none.”

Principle:

Godly living is seen in fairness, honesty, and care for others.

4. John Pointed to Jesus

“One more powerful than I will come.”

Principle:

John prepared the way and pointed people to Jesus, who baptizes with the Spirit and fire.

5. Jesus Is God's Beloved Son

“You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”

Principle:

Jesus' baptism reveals Him as the Son of God, filled with the Spirit and approved by the Father.

6. Jesus Is Fully Human and Fully Divine

“The son of Adam, the son of God.”

Principle:

The genealogy shows Jesus as a true man from Adam's line and as the Son of God.

XL. WHAT REAL REPENTANCE LOOKS LIKE

John made repentance practical.

For Everyone

“Share with the one who has none.”

Generosity.

For Tax Collectors

“Don't collect any more than you are required to.”

Honesty in business.

For Soldiers

“Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely.”

Fair use of power.

For All Workers

“Be content with your pay.”

Contentment instead of greed.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Repentance is proven not only in church, but at the table, at work, and in how we treat others.

XLI. JOHN THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

John is a model for every servant of God.

He Spoke God's Word

“The word of God came to John.”

He Called for Change

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

He Refused the Spotlight

“One more powerful than I will come.”

He Was Humble

“I am not worthy to untie His sandals.”

He Was Courageous

“John rebuked Herod.”

He Paid a Price

“He locked John up in prison.”

Key Truth

A faithful witness points to Jesus, whatever the cost.

XLII. THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Luke's list of names teaches important truths.

Jesus Is the Son of David

The promised King.

Jesus Is the Son of Abraham

The promised blessing to the nations.

Jesus Is the Son of Adam

The Savior of the whole human race.

Jesus Is the Son of God

The beloved Son of the Father.

God Remembers Ordinary People

Most of these names are unknown to us, but not to God.

God Works Through Broken Stories

Judah and Tamar, Ruth the outsider, families through exile.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's plan to send the Savior ran unbroken through every generation of human history.

XLIII. WHAT LUKE 3 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Is the Lord

“Prepare the way for the Lord.”

He Is God's Salvation

“All people will see God's salvation.”

He Is Greater Than John

“One more powerful than I.”

He Gives the Holy Spirit

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

He Is the Judge

“His winnowing fork is in His hand.”

He Identifies with Sinners

“Jesus was baptized too.”

He Is the Beloved Son

“You are My beloved Son.”

He Is the Son of Adam

“The son of Adam, the son of God.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is the Lord, the Spirit-giver, the Judge, and the beloved Son who came as one of us.

XLIV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Luke list so many rulers in verses 1 and 2?

To place John's ministry in real history, and to show that God's word came to a man in the wilderness rather than to the powerful.

Question 2

What was John's baptism about?

It was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Question 3

What did Isaiah prophesy about John?

That a voice would call in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord.

Question 4

Why did John call the crowds a brood of vipers?

Some came only to escape judgment without truly changing their hearts.

Question 5

What does “fruit in keeping with repentance” mean?

A changed life that shows a heart has truly turned to God.

Question 6

Why could people not rely on being Abraham's children?

Because family heritage cannot replace personal faith and repentance.

Question 7

What did John tell tax collectors and soldiers to do?

Be honest, do not cheat or extort, do not accuse falsely, and be content with their pay.

Question 8

How did John answer those who wondered if he was the Messiah?

He pointed to One more powerful who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Question 9

Why was John put in prison?

Because he rebuked Herod for marrying his brother's wife and for his other evils.

Question 10

Why was Jesus baptized if He had no sin?

To identify Himself with the sinners He came to save and to begin His ministry in obedience to the Father.

Question 11

What happened at Jesus' baptism?

Heaven opened, the Spirit came down like a dove, and the Father said, “You are My beloved Son.”

Question 12

What should Luke 3 change about the way Christians live today?

Luke 3 should cause believers to live:

- Repenting genuinely, not just outwardly.
- Trusting Christ personally, not family or church background.
- Sharing generously with those in need.
- Working honestly.
- Being content instead of greedy.
- Pointing others to Jesus instead of themselves.
- Speaking truth with courage.
- Resting in the Father's love through Jesus, the beloved Son.

XLV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Luke 3 asks several important questions.

Has My Repentance Produced Fruit?

Can people see a change in my life?

Am I Trusting My Heritage?

Or do I have a personal relationship with God?

Am I Generous?

Do I share with those who have none?

Am I Honest at Work?

Would my work pass John's test?

Am I Content?

Or is my heart ruled by greed?

Do I Point People to Jesus?

Or to myself?

Do I Speak Truth with Courage?

Even when it costs me?

Do I Know I Am Loved by the Father?

Through Jesus, His beloved Son?

XLVI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“What Then Should We Do?”

John preached a hard message.

Repent.

Judgment is coming.

The axe is at the root.

And the crowd did not walk away.

They did not argue.

They asked the right question:

“What then should we do?”

John did not give them a ceremony.

He gave them a new way to live.

Share your coat.

Share your food.

Be honest at work.

Do not abuse your power.

Be content.

This creates a powerful principle.

Repentance is not only something we feel.

It is something we do.

Principle:

Real repentance always asks, “What should I do?” and then does it.

XLVII. FINAL APPLICATION

Luke Chapter 3 brings us to the Jordan River.

The word of God comes to John in the wilderness.

He calls people to repent.

He warns that the axe is at the root.

He teaches tax collectors and soldiers to live honestly.

He points to One greater than himself.

He is thrown into prison for speaking the truth.

Jesus is baptized.

Heaven opens.

The Spirit descends.

The Father speaks.

And Luke traces Jesus' family back to Adam, the son of God.

Luke 3 therefore reminds us:

Never trust religious heritage in place of a real relationship with God.

Never think repentance is only a feeling.

Never take more than is fair.

Never seek the glory that belongs to Jesus.

Never forget that the Father loves His Son and welcomes all who come through Him.

The church does not need people who only come to the river.

It needs:

People whose lives bear fruit.

People who share with those in need.

People who live honestly and contentedly.

And people who point others to Jesus.

The same Jesus still calls:

Tell people to prepare the way for the Lord.

Tell people that God's salvation is for all.

Tell people that Jesus gives the Holy Spirit.

Tell people that He is the beloved Son of God.

And as you live:

Repent.

Share.

Live honestly.

Point to Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that Your word still comes to ordinary people.

Thank You for John, who prepared the way for Jesus.

Thank You that Your salvation is for all people.

Thank You that Jesus stood with sinners at the Jordan.

Thank You that He is Your beloved Son, filled with the Spirit.

Thank You that He came as one of us, a true son of Adam.

Thank You that You remember every name, even those the world forgets.

Forgive us when our repentance has been only words.

Forgive us when we have trusted our background instead of You.

Forgive us when we have been selfish, dishonest, or greedy.

Forgive us when we have wanted glory for ourselves.

Make our lives bear real fruit.

Make us generous to those in need.

Make us honest in our work and content with what we have.

Give us courage to speak the truth.

Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

And help us always point others to Jesus.

“You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“and 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.”” — Luke 3:22

Central Truth

True repentance prepares the heart for Jesus, the beloved Son of God, who was anointed by the Spirit, approved by the Father, and came as a true man from Adam's line to save all people.

Luke 3 in One Sentence

John preaches repentance in the wilderness, teaches people to prove it by generous and honest living, points to the greater One who will baptize with the Spirit and fire, and is imprisoned by Herod, while Jesus is baptized, anointed by the Spirit, declared the Father's beloved Son, and traced through David and Abraham back to Adam, the son of God.