



February 15, 2026

Jesus Begins His Ministry

Scripture: Luke 3:1-22

Introduction:

- Jesus between 12 and 30 years of age
- Did Joseph die? Did Jesus assume oversight of his family?
- Jesus and John were cousins (John six months older)
- John begins his public ministry before Jesus

Luke 3:1-2a | The Timeline

1 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,

Shows the accuracy of Luke's historical figures telling us when this happened (27-29 A.D.)

- Tiberius Caesar
- Pontius Pilate

- Herod
- Philip
- Lysanias
- Caiaphas was the former high priest
- Annas was his son-in-law
- Jesus's two mock trials after the Romans arrested him

Luke 3:2b-3 | John's Ministry Begins

2b the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

- God's word comes to John
- He goes into the wilderness
- This call is a history hinge — a turning point for the world
- John baptizes at different spots around the Jordan
- He calls for people's repentance and for the forgiveness of sins
- How? As evidenced through baptism
- The Mikvah: immersion for spiritual purity
- A radical rededication of their lives to God

Luke 3:4-6 | John's ministry fulfills prophecy

4 As 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,
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

- The fulfillment of **Isaiah 40:3-5**
- John is the last of the Old Testament prophets
- God had promised he would be:

1. Filling valleys

2. Leveling mountains
3. Setting crooked roads straight
4. Rough roads made smooth

Luke 3:7-9 | John's message to the people

7 He 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? 8 Bear 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. 9 Even 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."

- "You brood of vipers" — living as the seed of the evil one in **Genesis 3**
- Warning about God's coming wrath and...
- Bear fruit in accordance with repentance
- You won't escape this wrath because you descended from Abraham
- You are not "saved" because your parents were
- Each individual must make their own decision about Jesus
- We are one generation from extinction as Christians
- No fruit? The fire of God's wrath will be upon you
- The proof is the fruit (when connected to the Holy Spirit):
 1. Character fruit
 2. Reproduction fruit (to see your fruit on other people's trees)

Luke 3:10-14 | Three groups of people addressed about bearing fruit

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" 11 And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." 14 Soldiers 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."

1. The Jews who came to be baptized
2. The tax collectors

3. The soldiers

- To all three groups, John said: If you are truly repentant:
 1. Stay in your jobs
 2. Care for others
 3. Share with others
 4. Don't be cruel
 5. Just be honest and don't extort others
 6. Be content with what you have (happiness versus contentment)
 7. The major evidence of contentment: thanksgiving

Luke 3:15-17 | A greater baptism from Jesus

15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, 16 John 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 fire. 17 His 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."

- People wondered if John is the promised Messiah
- No! "One mightier than I..."
- "I'm not worthy to untie his sandals..." (the lowest menial job)
- **John 3:30**
30 He must increase, but I must decrease."
- It's all about Jesus; it's not about me
- John's baptism was with water
- But Jesus's baptism is with:
 1. The Holy Spirit — everything in our lives is relinquished to him
 2. With fire — Jesus burns away your sin for fruitfulness
 3. The new heavens and the new earth will happen with fire:

2 Peter 3:7

7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

- Jesus's judgment will be like a winnowing fork that separate wheat and chaff
- The wheat to God's eternal barn/home
- The chaff to an "unquenchable fire"
- Kirk Cameron and annihilationism: the meaning of "unquenchable"
- John is arrested for challenging Herod about marrying his brother's wife (Herodias)

Luke 3:18-20 | John's courage

18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

- John condemns Herod for marrying his brother's wife Herodias
- In direct violation of **Leviticus 18:16**
- John is arrested by Herod and locked in prison
- The call of the preacher to speak politically sometimes

Luke 3:21-22 | Jesus is baptized

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 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."

- Jesus now begins his public ministry at age 30
- Surely the Son heard the Father say, "Now!"
- Jesus is baptized by John and starts praying
- Why did Jesus need to be baptized? He was sinless?
 1. To identify with us
 2. And us with him
- Notice the order:
 1. While Jesus was praying (a prayerless life is a powerless life)
 2. The Holy Spirit (the third person of the Godhead) descends on Jesus

- 3. The Father speaks to his Son — Notice the Trinity here!
- 4. And tells him he is loved
- 5. And he is pleased thus far — from birth to 30 years of perfect obedience

- Please note the Father gives this message again at the Son's Transfiguration
- Three weeks before the Cross
- Did Jesus need the reminder from the Father again?

Two final thoughts

- 1. Jesus's baptism is the inauguration of his ministry of the kingdom of God
 - Evidently, Jesus needed this power to accomplish his ministry call
 - As do we to advance God's kingdom — **Acts 1:4**
 - It's the baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire
 - You will never be effective in ministry without it
 - And this fire can be quenched — **1 Thessalonians 5:19**

- 2. Fathers: tell your sons repeatedly:
 - You love them
 - You are so proud of them
 - Jesus needed it (twice!)
 - So do your sons

As I do now for all of you:

- 1. Jesus loves you...so much...and
- 2. If you've given your life to him and are living for him in his power, advancing God's kingdom, he's really proud of you, too!