

CHAPTER 3

Nothing is related concerning our Lord Jesus from his twelfth year to his entrance on his thirtieth year. We often think it would have been a pleasure and advantage to us if we had journals, or at least annals, of occurrences concerning him; but we have as much as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to communicate to us, and, if we improve not that, neither should we have improved more if we had had it. The great intention of the evangelists was to give us an account of the gospel of Christ, which we are to believe, and by which we hope for salvation: now that began in the ministry and baptism of John, and therefore they hasten to give us an account of that. We could wish, perhaps, that Luke had wholly passed by what was related by Matthew and Mark, and had written only what was new, as he has done in his two first chapters. But it was the will of the Spirit that some things should be established out of the mouth, not only of two, but of three witnesses; and we must not reckon it a needless repetition, nor shall we do so if we renew our meditations upon these things, with suitable affections. In this chapter we have,

I. The beginning of John's baptism, and the scope and intention of it (v. 1-6). His exhortation to the multitude (v. 7-9), and the particular instructions he gave to those who desired to be told their duty (v. 10-14).

II. The notice he gave them of the approach of the Messiah (v. 15-18), to which is added (though it happened after what follows) the mention of his imprisonment (v. 19-20).

III. Christ coming to be baptized of John, and his entrance therein upon the execution of his prophetic office (v. 21, 22).

IV. His pedigree and genealogy recorded up to Adam (v. 23-38).

LUKE 3:1-14

MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John's baptism introducing a new dispensation, it was requisite that we should have a particular account of it. Glorious things were said of John, what a distinguished favourite of Heaven he should be, and what a great blessing to this earth (¹⁵Luke 1:15, 17); but we lost him in the deserts, and there he remains until *the day of his showing unto Israel*, ⁸⁰Luke 1:80. And now at last that day dawns, and a welcome day it was to them that waited for it more than they that waited for the morning. Observe here,

I. The date of the beginning of John's baptism, when it was that he appeared; this is here taken notice of, which was not by the other evangelists, that the truth of the thing might be confirmed by the exact fixing of the time. And it is dated,

1. By the government of the heathen, which the Jews were under, to show that they were a conquered people, and therefore it was time for the Messiah to come to set up a spiritual kingdom, and an eternal one, upon the ruins of all the temporal dignity and dominion of David and Judah.

(1.) It is dated by the reign of the Roman emperor; it was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the third of the twelve Caesars, a very bad man, given to covetousness, drunkenness, and cruelty; such a man is mentioned first (saith Dr. Lightfoot), as it were, to teach us what to look for from that cruel and abominable city wherein Satan reigned in all ages and successions. The people of the Jews, after a long struggle, were of late made a province of the empire, and were under the dominion of this Tiberius; and that country which once had made so great a figure, and had many nations tributaries to it, in the reigns of David and Solomon, is now itself an inconsiderable despicable part of the Roman empire, and rather trampled upon than triumphed in.

— *En quo discordia cives, Perduxit miseros*

— *What dire effects from civil discord flow!*

The lawgiver was now departed from between Judah's feet; and, as an evidence of that, their public acts are dated by the reign of the Roman emperor, and therefore now Shiloh must come.

(2.) It is dated by the governments of the viceroys that ruled in the several parts of the Holy Land under the Roman emperor, which was another badge of their servitude, for they were all foreigners, which bespeaks a sad change with that people whose *governors* used to be *of themselves* (~~2811~~ Jeremiah 30:21), and it was their glory. *How is the gold become dim!*

[1.] Pilate is here said to be the governor, president, or procurator, of Judea. This character is given of him by some other writers, that he was a wicked man, and one that made no conscience of a lie. He reigned ill, and at last was displaced by Vitellius, president of Syria, and sent to Rome, to answer for his mal-administrations.

[2.] The other three are called *tetrarchs*, some think from the countries which they had the command of, each of them being over a *fourth part* of that which had been entirely under the government of Herod the Great. Others think that they are so called from the post of honour they held in the government; they had the *fourth* place, or were *fourth-rate* governors: the emperor was the *first*, the *pro-consul*, who governed a province, the *second*, a *king* the *third*, and a *tetrarch* the *fourth*. So Dr. Lightfoot.

2. By the government of the Jews among themselves, to show that they were a corrupt people, and that therefore it was time that the Messiah should come, to reform them, v. 2. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. God had appointed that there should be but one high priest at a time, but here were two, to serve some ill turn or other: one served one year and the other the other year; so some. One was the high priest, and the other the *sagan*, as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was high priest, and represented Aaron, and that was *Caiaphas*; Annas, the other, was *nasi*, or head of the sanhedrim, and represented Moses. But to us there is but one high priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

II. The origin and tendency of John's baptism.

1. The origin of it was *from heaven*: *The word of God came unto John*, v. 2. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did. It is the same expression that is used concerning the Old-Testament

prophets (~~200~~ Jeremiah 1:2); for John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended. We are not told how *the word of the Lord came* to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice, but it was to his satisfaction, and ought to be to ours. John is here called *the son of Zacharias*, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him that he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him *in the wilderness*; for those whom God *fits* he will find out, wherever they are. As the word of the Lord is not *bound* in a *prison*, so it is not *lost* in a *wilderness*. The *word of the Lord* made its way to Ezekiel among the captives by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle of Patmos. John was the *son of a priest*, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple, he was now to be admitted into the temple-service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before. But God had called him to a more honourable ministry, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrolls him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple: *John the son of Zacharias began his ministration such a time.*

2. The scope and design of it were to bring all the people of his country off from their sins and home to their God, v. 3. *He came first into all the country about Jordan*, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise under Joshua's conduct; there was the banner of the gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country: but, when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are *best pleased* in their retirements must cheerfully *exchange* them, when God calls them into places of concourse. *He came out of the wilderness into all the country*, with some marks of distinction, *preaching a new baptism*; not a sect, or party, but a *profession*, or distinguishing badge. The sign, or ceremony, was such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, *washing with water*, by which proselytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, *repentance for the remission of sins*: that is, all that submitted to his baptism,

(1.) Were thereby obliged to *repent of their sins*, to be *sorry* for what they had done amiss, and to *do so no more*. The former they *professed*, and were concerned to be *sincere* in their professions; the latter they *promised*, and were concerned to *make good* what they promised. He bound them,

not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to *cast away from them all their transgressions*, and to *make them new hearts* and to live new lives. The design of the gospel, which now began, was to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to *repent*.

(2.) They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleadable discharge from the guilt of sin. *Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*; agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old-Testament prophets, ²⁸⁸⁰Ezekiel 18:30.

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esaias, ch. 40:3. It is *written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet*, which he heard from God, which he spoke for God, those words of his which were *written* for the generations to come. Among them it is found that there should be *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight*. John's business is to *make way* for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry (v. 5, 6), *Every valley shall be filled*. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity: the land should be made plain by the pioneers for the Roman army, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side and the receivers of the gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the gospel of Christ, of which that was the introduction.

1. The humble shall by it be *enriched* with grace: *Every valley* that lies *low* and *moist* shall be *filled* and be *exalted*.

2. The proud shall by it be humbled; the *self-confident* that stand upon *their own bottom*, and the *self-conceited* that lift up *their own top*, shall have contempt put upon them: *Every mountain and hill shall be brought low*. If they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell.
3. Sinners shall be converted to God: *The crooked ways* and the *crooked spirits* shall be *made straight*; for, though *none can make that straight which God hath made crooked* (²⁰⁷³Ecclesiastes 7:13), yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked.
4. Difficulties that were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven shall be removed: *The rough ways shall be made smooth*; and they that love God's law shall have *great peace*, and *nothing shall offend them*. The gospel has made the way to heaven *plain* and easy to be *found*, *smooth* and easy to be *walked in*.
5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further (v. 6): *All flesh shall see the salvation of God*; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall *see* it; they shall have it set before them and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall *see* it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by the captivation of high thoughts and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by the leveling of the soul and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

IV. The general warnings and exhortations which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, v. 7-9. In Matthew he is said to have preached these same things to *many of the Pharisees and Sadducees*, that *came to his baptism* (⁴⁰⁰²Matthew 3:7-10); but here he is said to have spoken them *to the multitude*, that *came forth to be baptized of him*, v. 7. This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came, but dealt as plainly with them as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the *great*, so neither did he compliment the *many*, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin and warnings of wrath to the *multitude* that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for, if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here,

1. That the guilty corrupted race of mankind is become a *generation of vipers*; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one

another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that *nest of vipers*. He did it once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to *flee from the wrath to come*, which is certainly before them if they continue such; and their being a *multitude* will not be at all their security, for it will be neither *reproach* nor *loss* to God to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of *fleeing from the wrath to come*, but by *repentance*. They that submitted to the baptism of repentance thereby evidenced that they were *warned* to flee from the wrath to come and *took* the warning; and we by our baptism profess to have fled out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance are highly concerned to live like penitents (v. 8): “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*, else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape *the wrath to come*.” By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all: *Begin not* now to frame excuses from this great duty of repentance, by *saying within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father*. What will it avail us to be the children of godly parents if we be not godly, to be within the pale of the Church if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion, because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure by his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely, — *children to Abraham even out of stones*.

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater assistances and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sorer will our destruction be if we do not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*. Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, *now* that the *axe is laid to the root of the*

tree, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to the penitent are now more comfortable. “Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves.”

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length; it is the fittest place for them: *Every tree* that doth not bring forth fruit, *good fruit*, is *hewn down*, and *cast into the fire*. If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.

V. The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that enquired of him concerning their duty: the *people*, the *publicans*, and the *soldiers*. Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but we do not find them asking, *What shall we do?* They thought they knew what they had to do as well as he could tell them, or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the *people*, the *publicans*, and the *soldiers*, who knew that they had done amiss, and that they ought to do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance and unacquaintedness with the divine law, were particularly inquisitive: *What shall we do?* Note,

1. Those that are *baptized* must be *taught*, and those that have baptized them are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them, ~~4189~~ Matthew 28:19, 20.

2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition are.

3. They that would do their duty must desire to know their duty, and enquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* These here enquire, not, *What shall this man do?* but, *What shall we do?* *What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth?* Now John gives answer to each, according to their place and station.

(1.) He tells the *people* their duty, and that is to be charitable (v. 11): He *that has two coats*, and, consequently, one to spare, let him *give*, or *lend* at least, *to him that has none*, to keep him warm. Perhaps he saw among his hearers some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessaries. The gospel

requires *mercy*, and not sacrifice; and the design of it is to engage us to do all the good we can. *Food and raiment* are the two supports of life; he that hath *meat* to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of *daily food*, as well as he that hath clothes to spare: what we have we are but stewards of, and must use it, accordingly, as our Master directs.

(2.) He tells the *publicans* their duty, the collectors of the emperor's revenue (v. 13): *Exact no more than that which is appointed you*. They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power are apt to abuse it: "No, keep to your *book of rates*, and reckon it enough that you collect for Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more." The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

(3.) He tells the *soldiers* their duty, v. 14. Some think that these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion: others think that they were Romans; for it was not likely either that the Jews would serve the Romans or that the Romans would trust the Jews in their garrisons in their own nation; and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion; yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the *word of command* from him: *What must we do?* Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths often, are concerned to enquire what they shall do that they may be *found in peace*. In answer to this enquiry, John does not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service, but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to *keep ourselves from our iniquity*.

[1.] They must not be injurious to *the people* among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set: "*Do violence to no man*. Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent men's doing violence to

one another; but do not you *do violence* to any. *Shake no man*" (so the word signifies); "do not put people into fear; for the sword of war, as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, but a protection to those that do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war in peace; offer no incivility either to man or woman, nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make." Nor must they *accuse any falsely* to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes.

[2.] They must not be injurious to their *fellow-soldiers*; for some think that caution, not to *accuse falsely*, has special reference to them: "Be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be revenged on those whom you have a pique against, or undermine those above you, and get into their places." *Do not oppress any*; so some think the word here signifies as used by the Septuagint in several passages of the Old Testament.

[3.] They must not be given to mutiny, or contend with their generals about their pay: "*Be content with your wages*. While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is not more." It is discontent with what they have that makes men oppressive and injurious; they that never think they have enough themselves will not scruple at any the most irregular practices to make it more, by defrauding others. It is a rule to all servants that they *be content with their wages*; for they that indulge themselves in discontents expose themselves to many temptations, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is.

LUKE 3:15-20

IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

We are now drawing near to the appearance of our Lord Jesus publicly; the Sun will not be long after the morning-star. We are here told,

I. How the people took occasion, from the ministry and baptism of John, to think of the Messiah, and to think of him as at the door, as now come. Thus the way of the Lord was *prepared*, and people were prepared to bid Christ welcome; for, when men's expectations are raised, that which they

are in expectation of becomes doubly acceptable. Now when they observed what an excellent doctrine John Baptist preached, what a divine power went along with it, and what a tendency it had to reform the world,

1. They began presently to consider that now was the time for the Messiah to appear. The sceptre was departed from Judah, for they had no king but Caesar; nay, and the law-giver too was gone from between his feet, for Herod had lately slain the sanhedrim. Daniel's seventy weeks were now expiring; and therefore it was but three or four years after this that they looked that the kingdom of heaven should appear immediately, ~~and~~ Luke 19:11. Never did the corrupt state of the Jews more need a reformation, nor their distressed state more need a deliverance, than now.

2. Their next thought was, "Is not his he that should come?" *All thinking men mused, or reasoned, in their hearts, concerning John, whether he were the Christ or not.* He had indeed none of the external pomp and grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear; but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority, and therefore "why may we not think that he is the Messiah, and that he will shortly throw off this disguise, and appear in more glory?" Note, That which puts people upon considering, reasoning with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

II. How John disowned all pretensions to the honour of being himself the Messiah, but confirmed them in their expectations of him that really was the Messiah, v. 16, 17. John's office, as a crier or herald, was to give notice that the *kingdom of God* and the King of that kingdom were *at hand*; and therefore, when he had told all manner of people severally what they must do ("You must do this, and you must do that"), he tells them one thing more which they must all do: they must expect the Messiah now shortly to appear. And this serves as an *answer* to their *musings* and debates concerning himself. Though he knew not their thoughts, yet, in declaring this, he *answered* them.

1. He declares that the utmost he could do was to *baptize* them *with water*. He had no access to *the Spirit*, nor could command *that* or work upon *that*; he could only exhort them to *repent*, and assure them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, nor confer remission on them.

2. He consigns them, and turns them over, as it were, to Jesus Christ, for whom he was sent to *prepare the way*, and to whom he was ready to transfer all the interest he had in the affections of the people, and would have them no longer to *debate* whether John was the Messiah or no, but to look for him that was really so.

(1.) John owns the Messiah to have a greater *excellency* than he had, and that he was in all things preferable to him; he is one the *latchet of whose shoe* he does not think himself *worthy to loose*; he does not think himself worthy to be the meanest of his servants, to help him on and off with his shoes. John was *a prophet, yea more than a prophet*, more so than any of the Old-Testament prophets; but Christ was a prophet more than John, for it was both *by the Spirit of Christ, and of the grace of Christ*, that all the prophets prophesied, and John among the rest, ^{and} 1 Peter 1:10, 11. This was a great truth which John came to preach; but the manner of his expressing it bespeaks his humility, and in it he not only *does justice* to the Lord Jesus, but *does him honour* too: “He is one whom I am not worthy to approach, or draw nigh to, no not as a servant.” Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

(2.) He owns him to have a greater *energy* than he had: “He is *mightier than I*, and does that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful and for the terror of hypocrites and dissemblers.” They thought that a wonderful power went along with John; but what was that compared with the power which Jesus would come clothed with?

[1.] John can do no more than *baptize with water*, in token of this, that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will, *baptize with the Holy Ghost*; he can give the Spirit to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as *water* washes off the *dirt* on the outside, but as *fire* purges out the *dross* that is within, and *melts down* the metal, that it may be cast into a *new mould*.

[2.] John can only preach a *distinguishing* doctrine, and by word and sign *separate between the precious and the vile*; but Christ hath his *fan in his hand*, with which he can, and will, perfectly separate between the wheat and the chaff. He *will thoroughly purge his floor*; it is *his own*, and therefore he will *purge* it, and will cast out of his church the unbelieving impenitent Jews, and confirm in his church all that faithfully follow him.

[3.] John can only *speak comfort* to those that receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, *say to the righteous that it shall be well with them*; but Jesus Christ will *give them comfort*. John can only promise them that they shall be safe; but Christ will make them so: he will *gather the wheat into his garner*; good, serious, solid people he will gather now into his church on earth, which shall be made up of such, and he will shortly gather them into his church in heaven, where they shall be for ever sheltered.

[4.] John can only *threaten* hypocrites, and tell the *barren trees* that they shall be *hewn down and cast into the fire*; but Christ can execute that threatening; those that are as *chaff*, light, and vain, and worthless, *he will burn with fire unquenchable*. John refers here to ~~the~~ Malachi 3:18; 4:1, 2. *Then, when the floor is purged, ye shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, for the day comes that shall burn as an oven.*

The evangelist concludes his account of John's preaching with an *et caetera* (v. 18): *Many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people*, which are not recorded. *First*, John was an *affectionate* preacher. He was *parakalon* — *exhorting*, beseeching; he pressed things home upon his hearers, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. *Secondly*, He was a *practical* preacher. Much of his preaching was *exhortation*, quickening them to their duty, directing them in it, and not amusing them with matters of nice speculation. *Thirdly*, He was a *popular* preacher. Though he had scribes and Pharisees, men of polite learning, attending his ministry, and Sadducees, men of *free thought*, as they pretended, yet he addressed himself *to the people*, *pros ton laon* — *to the laity*, and accommodated himself to their capacity, as promising himself best success among them. *Fourthly*, He was an *evangelical* preacher, for so the word here used signifies, *euangelizeto* — *he preached the gospel* to the people; in all his *exhortations*, he directed people to Christ, and excited and encouraged their expectations of *him*. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for righteousness and strength. *Fifthly*, He was a *copious* preacher: *Many other things he preached*, *polla men kai hetera* — *many things, and different*. He preached a great deal, shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God; and he *varied* in his preaching, that those who were not reached, and touched, and wrought upon, by one truth, might be by another.

III. How full a stop was put to John's preaching. When he was in the midst of his usefulness, going on thus successfully, he was imprisoned by

the malice of Herod (v. 19, 20): *Herod the tetrarch being reprov'd by him*, not only for living in incest with his brother Philip's wife, but for the many other *evils which Herod had done* (for those that are wicked in one instance are commonly so in many others), he could not *bear it*, but contracted an antipathy to him for his plain dealing, and *added* this wickedness to all the rest, which was indeed *above all*, that he *shut up John in prison*, put that burning and shining light under a bushel. Because he could not bear his reproofs, others should be deprived of the benefit of his instructions and counsels. Some little good he might do to those who had access to him, when he was in prison; but nothing to what he might have done if he had had liberty to go about all the country, as he had done. We cannot think of Herod's doing this without the greatest compassion and lamentation, nor of God's permitting it without admiring the depth of the divine counsels, which we cannot account for. Must he be silenced who is the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*? Must such a preacher be shut up in prison who ought to have been set up in the courts of the temple? But thus the faith of his disciples must be tried; thus the unbelief of those who rejected him must be punished; thus he must be Christ's forerunner in suffering as well as preaching; and thus, having been for about a year and a half preparing people for Christ, he must now give way to him, and, the Sun being risen, the morning-star must of course disappear.

LUKE 3:21-38

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

The evangelist mentioned John's imprisonment before Christ's being baptized, though it was nearly a year after it, because he would finish the story of John's ministry, and then introduce that of Christ. Now here we have,

I. A short account of Christ's baptism, which had been more fully related by St. Matthew. Jesus came, to be baptized of John, and he was so, v. 21, 22.

1. It is here said that, *when all the people were baptized*, then *Jesus was baptized*: all that were then present. Christ would be baptized last, among the common people, and in the rear of them; thus he humbled himself, and

made himself of no reputation, as one of the least, nay, as less than the least. He saw what multitudes were hereby prepared to receive him, and then he appeared.

2. Notice is here taken of Christ's *praying* when he was *baptized*, which was not in Matthew: being *baptized*, and *praying*. He did not *confess sin*, as others did, for he had none to confess; but he *prayed*, as others did, for he would thus keep up communion with his Father. Note, The inward and spiritual grace of which sacraments are the outward and visible signs must be fetched in by prayer; and therefore prayer must always accompany them. We have reason to think that Christ now prayed for this manifestation of God's favour to him which immediately followed; he prayed for the discovery of his Father's favour to him, and the descent of the Spirit. What was promised to Christ, he must obtain by prayer: *Ask of me and I will give thee, etc.* Thus he would put an honour upon prayer, would tie us to it, and encourage us in it.

3. When he prayed, *the heaven was opened*. He that by his power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by his power parted the air, another fluid element, to open a correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was there opened to Christ, and by him to us, *a new and living way into the holiest*; sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again. Prayer is an ordinance that *opens heaven: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

4. *The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*; our Lord Jesus was now to receive greater measures of the Spirit than before, to qualify him for his prophetic office, ²³⁰Isaiah 61:1. When he begins to preach, *the Spirit of the Lord is upon him*. Now this is here expressed by a sensible evidence for his encouragement in his work, and for the satisfaction of John the Baptist; for he was told before that by this sign it should be notified to him which was the Christ. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, that he might be revealed to be a personal substance, and not merely an operation of the Godhead: and thus (saith he) was made a full, clear, and sensible demonstration of the Trinity, at the beginning of the gospel; and very fitly is this done at Christ's baptism, who was to make the ordinance of baptism a badge of the profession of that faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

5. There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory (so it is expressed, ^{<0117>}2 Peter 1:17), *Thou art my beloved Son*. Here, and in Mark, it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew as spoken of him: *This is my beloved Son*. It comes all to one; it was intended to be a notification to John, and as such was properly expressed by, *This is my beloved Son*; and likewise an answer to his prayer, and so it is most fitly expressed by. *Thou art*. It was foretold concerning the Messiah, *I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son*, ^{<0174>}2 Samuel 7:14. *I will make him my First-born*, ^{<0827>}Psalms 89:27. It was also foretold that he should be God's *elect, in whom his soul delighted* (^{<0341>}Isaiah 42:1); and, accordingly, it is here declared, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.

II. A long account of Christ's pedigree, which had been more briefly related by St. Matthew. Here is,

1. His age: *He now began to be about thirty years of age*. So old Joseph was when he stood before Pharaoh (^{<0446>}Genesis 41:46), David when he began to reign (^{<0104>}2 Samuel 5:4), and at this age the priests were to enter upon the full execution of their office, ^{<0003>}Numbers 4:3. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that it is plain, by the manner of expression here, that he was just twenty-nine years old complete, and entering upon his thirtieth year, in the month *Tisri*; that, after this, he lived three years and a half, and died when he was thirty-two years and a half old. *Three years and a half*, the time of Christ's ministry, is a period of time very remarkable in scripture. *Three years and six months* the heavens were shut up in Elijah's time, ^{<0051>}Luke 4:25; ^{<0517>}James 5:17. This was the half week in which the Messiah was to confirm the covenant, ^{<0127>}Daniel 9:27. This period is expressed in the prophetic writings by a time, times, and half a time (^{<0117>}Daniel 12:7; ^{<0624>}Revelation 12:14); and by forty-two months, and a thousand two hundred and threescore days, ^{<0610>}Revelation 11:2, 3. It is the time fixed for the witnesses' prophesying in sackcloth, in conformity to Christ's preaching in his humiliation just so long.

2. His pedigree, v. 23, etc. Matthew had given us somewhat of this. He goes no higher than Abraham, but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Christ was the son of Abraham, in whom *all the families of the earth are blessed*, and that he was heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, and heir-male of the house of David: but Luke, designing to show that Christ was the *seed of the*

woman, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Ei, or Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the virgin Mary. And some suggest that the supply which our translators all along insert here is not right, and that it should not be read *which*, that is, which *Joseph* was the son of Heli, but which *Jesus*; he was *the son of Joseph, of Eli, of Matthat*, etc., and he, that is, Jesus, was the son of *Seth, of Adam, of God*, v. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word, but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the church and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from Solomon, whose natural line ending in Jechonias, the legal right was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of David, which line Luke here pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies either of their own knowledge or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds' books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down in Matthew; and the pedigree of Heli, the father of Mary, to be as it is set down here in Luke. And this is the meaning of *hos enomizeto* (v. 23), not, *as it was supposed*, referring only to Joseph, but *uti sancitum est lege* — *as it is entered into the books*, as we find it upon record; by which is appeared that Jesus was both by father and mother's side the Son of David, witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time have liberty to compare with the original, and further the evangelists needed not to go; nay, had they varied from that, they had not gained their point. Its not being contradicted at that time is satisfaction enough to us now that it is a true copy, as it is further worthy of observation, that, when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all lost and destroyed with the Jewish state and nation; for now there was no more occasion for them.

One difficulty occurs between Abraham and Noah, which gives us some perplexity, v. 35, 36. Sala is said to be the *son of Cainan*, and he *the son of Arphaxad*, whereas Sala was the son of Arphaxad (^(Gen)Genesis 10:24;

11:12), and there is no such man as Cainan found there. But, as to that, it is sufficient to say that the Seventy Interpreters, who, before our Saviour's time, translated the Old Testament into Greek, for reasons best known to themselves inserted that Cainan; and St. Luke, writing among the *Hellenist Jews*, was obliged to make use of that translation, and therefore to take it as he found it.

The genealogy concludes with this, *who was the son of Adam, the son of God.*

(1.) Some refer it to Adam; he was in a peculiar manner the *son of God*, being, more immediately than any of his offspring, the offspring of God by creation.

(2.) Others refer it to Christ, and so make the last words of this genealogy to denote his divine and human nature. He was both the *Son of Adam* and the *Son of God* that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, the *sons of God*.