SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Luke 3

Prepare the Way of the Lord — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God's word comes to a wilderness prophet who calls ordinary men to a repentance that shows up in their wallets and their tempers, and who points away from himself to the mightier One. At the Jordan the Father names Jesus His beloved Son, and Luke traces Him back through David and Abraham to Adam — a Savior for every son of Adam.

00 The Text

LUKE 3 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,

2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.

5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'"

7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

13 And he said to them,
"Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."

14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them,

"Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,

16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

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

18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.

19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,

20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and
while He was praying, heaven was opened,

22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli,

24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai,

26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda,

27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,

28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,

29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,

30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,

31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,

32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,

33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,

34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,

35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah,

36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,

37 the son of MethuSelah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,

38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** "the word of God came to John" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "for the forgiveness of sins" — Promise / blessing
- **v4** "MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD" — Command / instruction
- **v6** "ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD" — Promise / blessing
- **v7** "You brood of vipers" — Sin / warning
- **v7** "flee from the wrath to come" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "bear fruits in keeping with repentance" — Command / instruction
- **v8** "We have Abraham for our father" — Sin / warning
- **v9** "the axe is already laid at the root of the trees" — Sin / warning
- **v11** "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none" — Command / instruction

- **v13** “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to” — Command / instruction
- **v14** “be content with your wages” — Command / instruction
- **v16** “One is coming who is mightier than I” — God — His character & actions
- **v16** “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” — Promise / blessing
- **v17** “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” — Sin / warning
- **v18** “he preached the gospel to the people” — Promise / blessing
- **v19** “all the wicked things which Herod had done” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “he locked John up in prison” — Sin / warning
- **v21** “while He was praying, heaven was opened” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “You are My beloved Son” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “in You I am well-pleased” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “about thirty years of age” — Time / place / contrast
- **v23** “as was supposed” — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** “the son of David” — Promise / blessing
- **v34** “the son of Abraham” — Promise / blessing
- **v38** “the son of Adam, the son of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v3** “repentance” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v7** “baptized” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v10** “what shall we do” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v10** “What shall we do” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

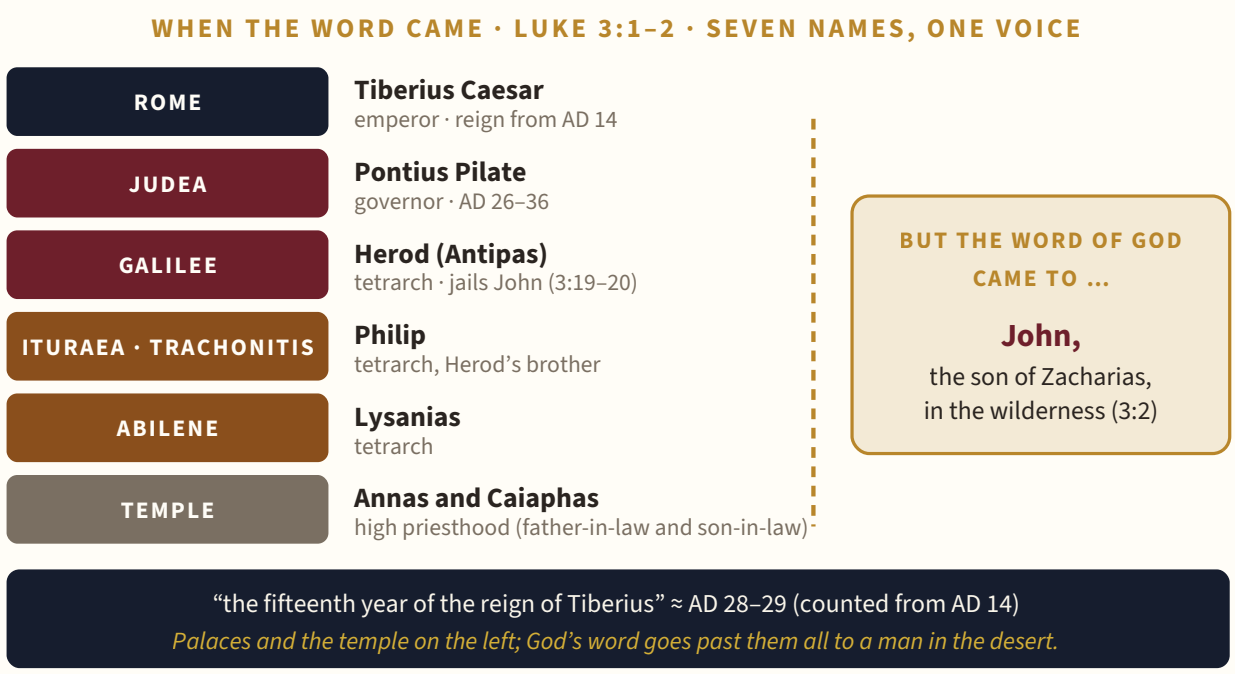
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 3:2

"in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,
△the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, ◷in the wilderness."

FIGURE · WHEN THE WORD CAME



Luke names the powerful of Rome, Judea, Galilee and the temple, then tells us God's word passed them by and came to John in the wilderness.

Setting. About AD 28–29, "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (v1), with Pilate in Judea, Herod Antipas in Galilee, and Annas and Caiaphas over the temple (vv1–2). The word of God comes to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he preaches through the district around the Jordan (vv2–3). Jesus is baptized there with all the people (v21) and is "about thirty years of age" (v23).

Structure:

- vv1–6 — **the voice in the wilderness:** seven rulers named; "the word of God came to John" (v2); a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (v3); Isaiah 40:3–5 — make ready the way, every ravine filled, "all flesh will see the salvation of God" (vv4–6).
- vv7–14 — **fruit and the axe:** "You brood of vipers" (v7); bear fruits in keeping with repentance, not "We have Abraham" (v8); the axe at the root (v9); "What shall we do?" — the crowds (vv10–11), tax collectors (vv12–13), soldiers (v14).

- vv15–20 — **the Spirit and fire:** are you the Christ? (v15); water vs. the Holy Spirit and fire; not fit to untie His sandals (v16); the winnowing fork, wheat and chaff (v17); "he preached the gospel" (v18); Herod reprimanded, John locked up (vv19–20).
- vv21–22 — **the heavens opened:** Jesus baptized and praying; the Spirit like a dove; "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."
- vv23–38 — **the line back to God:** about thirty; "as was supposed" the son of Joseph (v23); seventy-seven names, through Nathan and David (v31), Abraham (v34), Noah (v36), Adam, "the son of God" (v38).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "son" ×79 — v2, v22, and seventy-seven times in the genealogy (vv23–38): "the son of …" runs from Joseph to God.
- "baptize / baptized / baptism" ×7 — vv3, 7, 12, 16 (×2), 21 (×2).
- "John" ×4 — vv2, 15, 16, 20; "Herod" ×4 — vv1, 19 (×2), 20.
- "God" ×4 — vv2, 6, 8, 38.
- "what shall we do" ×3 — vv10, 12, 14.
- "fire" ×3 — vv9, 16, 17.
- "Abraham" ×3 — vv8 (×2), 34.
- "way / paths / roads" ×3 — vv4 (×2), 5.
- "people" ×3 — vv15, 18, 21; "crowds" ×2 — vv7, 10.
- "repentance" ×2 — vv3, 8; "fruit(s)" ×2 — vv8, 9; "tree(s)" ×2 — v9 (×2).
- "wilderness" ×2 — vv2, 4; "Holy Spirit" ×2 — vv16, 22.

Contrasts: Rome's rulers ⟷ a voice in the wilderness (vv1–2). Brood of vipers ⟷ children of Abraham (vv7–8). Good fruit ⟷ cut down and thrown into the fire (v9). Two tunics ⟷ none (v11). John ⟷ the One mightier (v16). Water ⟷ the Holy Spirit and fire (v16). Wheat ⟷ chaff; barn ⟷ unquenchable fire (v17). John's boldness ⟷ Herod's wickedness (vv19–20). "As was supposed" the son of Joseph ⟷ the Son of God (vv22–23, 38).

Shape of the chapter: three panels — John's ministry (1–20), Jesus' baptism (21–22), Jesus' line (23–38). John's story is finished first, even his arrest, so that the spotlight falls on Jesus alone. The chapter opens with the names of the mighty and closes with the name of God.

Chapter theme (my words): God speaks again, and He speaks to the wilderness. Real repentance changes the way a man handles his money, his power and his mouth. John makes himself small so Jesus can be seen, and heaven itself declares who Jesus is: the beloved Son, the son of Adam, the Son of God.

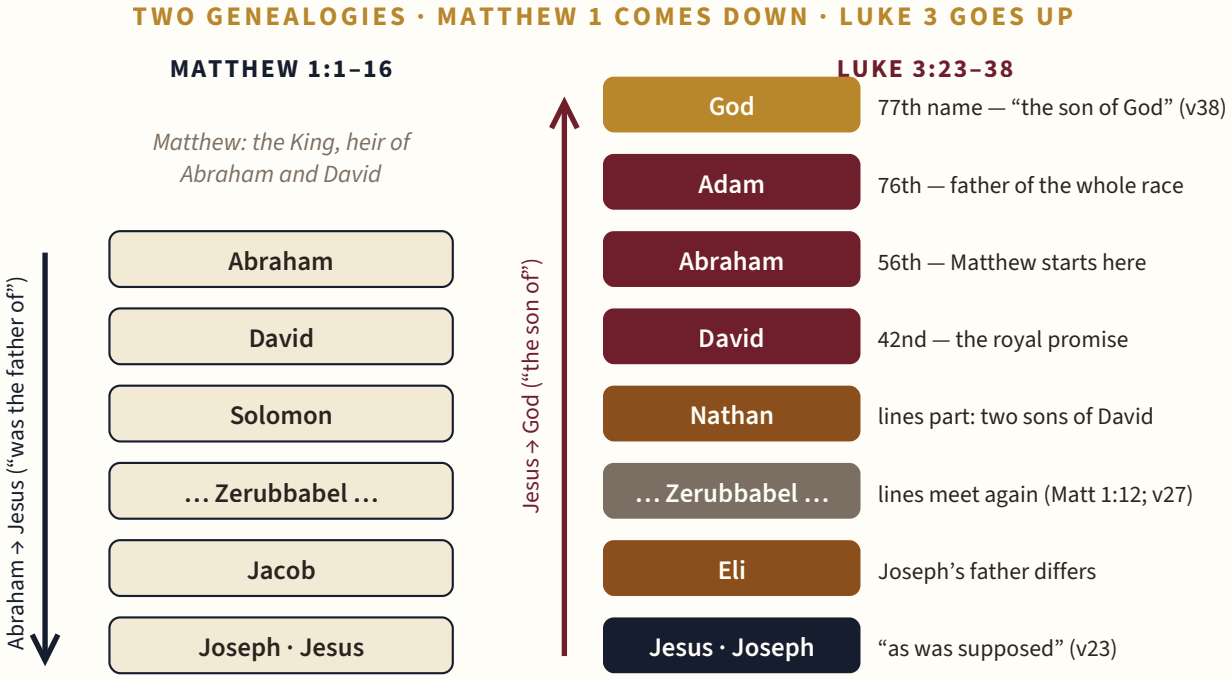
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 3:16

"John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but △ One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; ☆ He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

FIGURE · TWO GENEALOGIES



Luke: the Son of Man for every son of Adam · names counted from the NASB text

Matthew counts down from Abraham to Jesus through Solomon; Luke climbs up from Jesus through Nathan, past Abraham and Adam, to God.

Why does Luke list all those rulers? To nail the gospel to real history. Sproul: "Luke is very careful and meticulous to give us the historical framework in which John the Baptist appeared." Guzik: "This is not a fairy tale beginning with "once upon a time."" And the list makes a point — the word of God passed every palace and the temple and came to a man in the desert.

What was John's baptism? "A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (v3). Sproul: "This was not New Testament baptism." It was a sign of a turned heart, getting Israel ready for the Messiah. The forgiveness itself would come through the One John pointed to.

Why so harsh — "brood of vipers"? Because the crowd was trusting its pedigree. Guzik: "Addressing your audience as a family of snakes is not a customary way to begin a sermon." Spurgeon: "Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear." Sproul separates true sorrow over sin (contrition) from fear of getting caught (attrition). Fruit tells which one you have.

What does repentance look like on Monday? Sharing a tunic, collecting only what is owed, no bullying, no lying, and being content with your pay (vv10–14). Guzik: "John did not see tax collecting or soldiering as inherently evil." Sproul: "You cannot be converted and be a thief."

What is the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire"? Guzik reads both together as cleansing — "God's power is always a transforming power, a purifying power." Verse 17 adds the other edge: the chaff burns "with unquenchable fire." The Spirit was poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:3–4), and the winnowing will be finished when Christ returns to judge. Same Christ, two comings.

Why was the sinless Jesus baptized? Guzik: "Jesus did not receive baptism because He was a sinner." He stood with sinners, and Sproul adds that He was fulfilling all righteousness as the second Adam — "Only one person has ever satisfied the law of God, and that's Jesus." His perfect obedience is credited to all who trust Him.

What happened at the Jordan? Jesus was praying (only Luke tells us); heaven opened; the Spirit came in bodily form like a dove; the Father spoke Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 over Him. Guzik: "The three Persons of the Trinity were all manifested at once."

Why does Luke's genealogy differ from Matthew's? Matthew goes down from Abraham through Solomon to Joseph; Luke goes up from Joseph through Nathan to God. Guzik: "The best explanation for this seems to be that Luke followed Mary's line." Sproul would like to think so but "can't prove that beyond a shadow of a doubt." I hold it loosely too; what matters is that both lines run through David, so Jesus is the rightful King, and Luke's line runs to Adam, so He is the Savior of every man.

What does it all add up to? Henry puts the genealogy and the baptism together: "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 at the Jordan, "sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again." That is my hope in one line: heaven opened over Jesus, and through Him to me.

Word study (Greek):

- **word — *rhēma* (G4487):** a spoken word; "the word of God came to John" (v2; 1:37–38).
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** a change of mind that turns the life (vv3, 8).
- **brood — *gennēma* (G1081) / vipers — *echidna* (G2191):** offspring of snakes (v7; Matt 12:34; 23:33).
- **be content — *arkeō* (G714):** to be satisfied with enough (v14; 1 Tim 6:8; Heb 13:5); wages — *opsōnion* (G3800).
- **winnowing fork — *ptyon* (G4425):** the fork that tosses grain into the wind (v17; Matt 3:12).
- **fit — *hikanos* (G2425):** worthy, sufficient (v16; 7:6).
- **reprimanded — *elenchō* (G1651):** to expose and convict (v19).
- **praying — *proseuchomai* (G4336):** Jesus at prayer (v21; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29).
- **well-pleased — *eudokeō* (G2106):** to take delight in (v22; 2:14).
- **as was supposed — *nomizō* (G3543):** thought, reckoned by law and custom (v23).
- **began — *archomai* (G756):** about thirty at the beginning (v23; Acts 1:1).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The word skipped the palace** — it came to John in the wilderness (v2).
2. **Silence broken** — after four hundred years (Sproul).
3. **The highway is for God** — prepare for the presence of Jesus (Sproul).
4. **Repentance bears fruit** — always (Guzik); no converted thief (Sproul).
5. **Holiness starts at your post** — share, be honest, be content (vv10–14).
6. **The lower the better** — Spurgeon on the sandal strap.
7. **Fire purifies and fire judges** (vv16–17).
8. **Truth to power costs** — John in prison (vv19–20).
9. **Heaven opened to a praying Son** — Father, Son and Spirit (vv21–22).
10. **A Savior for every son of Adam** (v38).

Cross-references: Gen 3:15; 5:1–32; 11:10–26; 41:46; Num 4:3; 2 Sam 5:4; Ps 2:7; Isa 40:3–5; 42:1; Mal 3:1; 4:5–6; Matt 1:1–17; 3:1–17; 12:34; 14:3–12; Luke 1:17, 37–38, 80; 2:14; John 1:29–34; 3:24; Acts 1:1; 2:3–4; Rom 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:45; 1 Tim 6:8; Heb 13:5.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 3:8

"Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ⚠ 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham."

FIGURE · "WHAT SHALL WE DO?"

"WHAT SHALL WE DO?" · THREE QUESTIONS, THREE ANSWERS · LUKE 3:10–14

THE CROWDS v10–11	TAX COLLECTORS v12–13	SOLDIERS v14
Two tunics? Share with him who has none — food likewise.	Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.	No money by force, no false accusation; be content with wages.
greed → generosity	theft → honesty	force → contentment

No one is told to quit his job. Each is told to stop sinning in the place where he already stands.

Three groups ask the same question; John gives each a plain answer that turns the sin of his station into its opposite.

Command to obey — bear fruit where I stand. John didn't tell the soldier to quit the army; he told him to stop bullying, stop lying and be content (v14). My repentance has to show up in the same plain places: my money, my mouth, my temper, how I treat the men under me and over me. This week I will name one "what shall I do?" and do it.

Sin to confess — trusting the pedigree. "We have Abraham for our father" (v8). I have leaned on my history — years in church, the ministry, the books, what I used to be — instead of a turned heart today. A lot of men I sit with lean on the opposite pedigree: "that's just who I am, my father was the same." Either way it's an excuse. God can raise up children from stones; He can change me.

Example to follow — John taking the low place. John had crowds wondering if he was the Messiah (v15), and he used the moment to say, "I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals." Spurgeon: "Anything for Jesus, the lower the better." I want to do the unseen job, give away the credit, and point every man to Jesus instead of to me.

Truth to face — the axe is already at the root. Judgment is not a someday idea (v9, v17). The chaff burns. That is not meant to scare me into hiding but to send me running to the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Promise to trust — "in You I am well-pleased." The Father said it over His Son, and I am accepted only "in the Beloved." I can't earn that sentence; Jesus kept the law I broke (Sproul). When I come to God in Christ, the Father's pleasure that rests on Jesus covers me too.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. God's word passed by the emperor and the high priest and came to a man in the desert. Where has God met me — in what "wilderness" of my life? (3:1–2; Hos 2:14) *The word of God came to John in the wilderness.*
2. What "mountains" of pride and "ravines" of neglect in me need to be leveled or filled so I am ready for Jesus? (3:4–6; Isa 40:3–5) *Every ravine will be filled, every mountain brought low.*
3. What am I tempted to lean on instead of real repentance — my family, my church, my past, my baptism? (3:8–9) *Do not begin to say, 'We have Abraham for our father.'*
4. If I asked John, "What shall I do?", what would he name in my job, my money, or the way I treat people? (3:10–14) *Integrity in the ordinary things (Guzik).*
5. John said, "I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals." What small, unseen service could I do for Jesus this week? (3:16; Phil 2:5–8) *Anything for Jesus, the lower the better (Spurgeon).*
6. The Father said to Jesus, "in You I am well-pleased." What does it mean for me that God's pleasure rests on me only in Christ? (3:21–22; Eph 1:6) *Only one person has ever satisfied the law of God (Sproul).*

Worship. The God who passed by Caesar's palace spoke in the wilderness. He sent a voice to level mountains and fill valleys, so that all flesh would see His salvation. He opened heaven over His praying Son, sent His Spirit, and spoke His delight. He traced His Son's line through kings and shepherds and sinners back to Adam — so that no son of Adam is out of reach.

Prayer. Father, Your word came to John in the wilderness; let it come to me in mine. Level my pride and fill the empty places I have neglected. Keep me from leaning on my history — show me the fruit You want this week, in my wallet, my words and my temper. Make me small and Jesus large. Thank You that in Your beloved Son You are well-pleased, and that in Him You receive me. Baptize me with Your Spirit and burn away the chaff. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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