



# Prepare the Way

## Summary and Goal

John came to “prepare the way of the Lord.” He preached a baptism of forgiveness, and boldly called people to repentance. The Christmas season is the most natural time of the year for Gospel Conversations. As we prepare for Christmas, may we help “prepare the way” in the lives of those around us, making the most of the season by sharing the hope and love that we have in Christ anywhere, anytime, and with anybody.

### **Main Passages**

Luke 3:1-6

### **Session Outline**

1. Sacrificial (Luke 3:1-2)
2. Bold (Luke 3:3)
3. Humble (Luke 3:4-6)

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### **Theological Theme**

John the Baptist was the forerunner to Christ. John was sent from God on a mission to bear witness to the light that all might put their faith in Christ. John was not the light. Rather, he came to bear witness about the light.

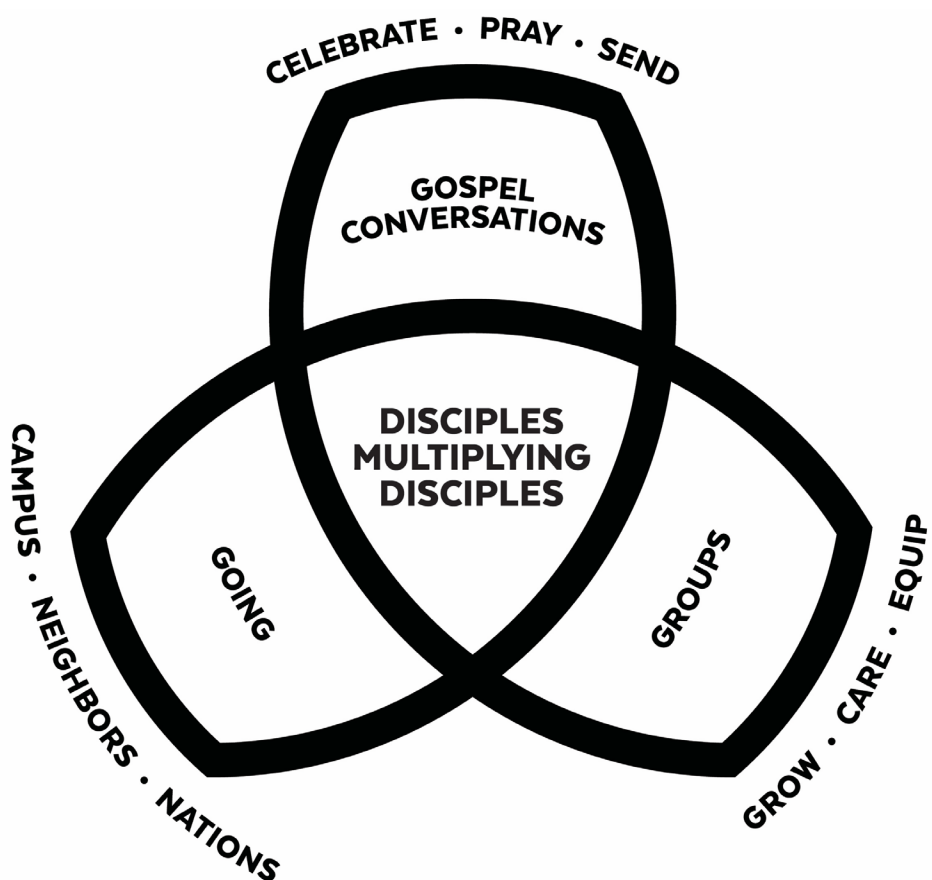
### **Christ Connection**

Christ is the Messiah, the Promised One, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). John the Baptist bore witness because he knew the truth.

### **Missional Application**

Jesus told His disciples just before He ascended that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and they would testify to the world about Him. Their mission was the same as John’s mission. After 2000 years, the mission of Christians hasn’t changed. Christians today are voices crying in the wilderness, pointing to Christ, proclaiming, “Behold the Lamb!”

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples



## DxD This Week

### ***Suggested Opening***

Pre-enlist member with social/party responsibilities to share about Group Christmas party. Have member with missions responsibility to share about the Groups mission project.

# 2

## Session Plan

# Prepare the Way

### Introduction

- ❓ What is the purpose of a lighthouse? What might prohibit a lighthouse from fulfilling its purpose?
- ❓ In what way should followers of Christ act as “lighthouses” to those around them?

John the Baptist was the first person to bear witness of Christ. His example is an encouragement and guide for all Christians. Those who follow Christ don't look at New Testament narratives and seek to recreate them, for this practice doesn't recognize the fact that Christ's ministry on earth and the time of the apostles was unique and served to lay the foundation of the church. Now that the foundation has been laid, no new foundation is necessary. Instead, Christians carry out the clear directives of the New Testament with humble faith and obedience. John's example gives believers guidance in how to carry out the command to bear witness of Christ.

### 1. Sacrificial (Luke 3:1-2)

Luke wrote that “God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.” This is significant because this means that he wasn't a sanctioned teacher or preacher. He didn't fit the mold of the regular religious leadership class. His message was simple, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!”

- ❓ According to Luke 1:2, where did John the Baptist conduct his ministry? What other light does Matthew 3:4-6 shed on John's ministry and living?
- ❓ Why did John live as he did? What made John sacrifice so much to fulfill his mission? How are all followers of Jesus called to live like John the Baptist did to some degree?
- ❓ Application: Where do you need to sacrifice for the sake of following Jesus?

## 2. Bold (Luke 3:3)

John the Baptist sacrificed a great deal for the sake of Christ. He dressed strangely. His food was meager. He was imprisoned. Finally, he was beheaded. But John was no weakling who was trampled on by those in power, forced to suffer. He suffered because of his boldness.

- ❓ What evidence do we have of John's boldness from these verses?
- ❓ Where is there a need for Christian boldness today?
- ❓ Application: Where do you have a need for boldness for Christ's sake? How might you seek this boldness from Him rather than seeking to stir it up yourself?

## 3. Humble (Luke 3:4-6)

John the Baptist's sacrifice revealed how much he valued Christ. His boldness revealed his confidence in God. His humility revealed his clarity about himself.

- ❓ What did John the Baptist reveal about his mission in verses 11-12? What made John the Baptist humble?
- ❓ How would you define humility? Why is it important for Christians to be humble?
- ❓ Application: Where do you need to grow in humility? How does further reflection on the gospel help us to do this?

## Conclusion

The Christmas season is an excellent time for Christians to humble themselves before the Father and to witness of Jesus Christ with boldness, no matter what the sacrifice. John the Baptist provided a helpful and challenging example to believers today who desire to give testimony of Christ during the holiday season.

- ❓ Would you say you regularly sacrifice for the sake of Christ? What do you need to sacrifice this Advent season that others might hear the truth about Jesus?
- ❓ How might you seek boldness to pursue gospel conversations with those around you during the Christmas season? What makes this difficult for you?
- ❓ How might true humility give us further opportunities to point others to Jesus?



## Expanded Session Content

# Prepare the Way

### Introduction

- ❓ What is the purpose of a lighthouse? What might prohibit a lighthouse from fulfilling its purpose?
- ❓ In what way should followers of Christ act as “lighthouses” to those around them?

Modern technology has made maritime navigation much safer and easier. Sailors no longer have to depend on the stars to guide them. They don't have to use a line to sound water depth. Lighthouses aren't really necessary anymore either. There was a time, however, when all of these navigational tools were the only way sailors made it back to shore alive.

Lighthouses provided the indispensable service of helping ship captains know how close to shore they were. Lighthouses signaled both danger and safety. A lighthouse indicated to the sailor where not to go to avoid crashing into rocks or running aground. By virtue of their ability to illuminate danger, they showed the way to safety.

John the Baptist was a lighthouse. He called upon his listeners to repent of sin (warning of danger) and to receive the Kingdom (revelation of safety). The call of Christ to the lost world is both negative and positive. It is simultaneously a call to something and a call away from something. Christ said that people can't serve two masters. This was John the Baptist's message. This is also the message of Christians today. In order to truly give the good news of forgiveness in Christ, Christians must be clear about the bad news of each person's offensiveness to God.

### Session Summary

Jesus explained to His disciples that repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name would be proclaimed in all nations, and that they themselves would be the witnesses who would bear testimony about Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8). Jesus promised that He would never cast out those who came to Him (John 6:37). He never sends away humble sinners who come to Him for mercy, but He does send out redeemed souls to call other thirsty souls to find eternal refreshment in Him (John 20:21).

John the Baptist was the first person to bear witness of Christ. His example is an encouragement and guide for all Christians. Those who follow Christ don't look at New Testament narratives and seek to recreate them, for this practice doesn't recognize the fact that Christ's ministry on earth and the time of the apostles was unique and served to lay the foundation of the church. Now that the foundation has been laid, no new foundation is necessary. Instead, Christians carry out the clear directives of the New Testament with humble faith and obedience. John's example gives believers guidance in how to carry out the command to bear witness of Christ.

For example, Christians should not go about offering a baptism of repentance in nearby rivers or dress in camel hair and eat locusts, but there are important principles that we can discern in John's ministry that should be imitated. We will see that John was sacrificial, bold, and humble. Those same characteristics are present in all faithful ambassadors of Christ, from the first century until the 21st. During the season of Advent, as we anticipate the return of Christ, we should take the opportunities we are given to proclaim the truth of Christ as John did.

## 1. Sacrificial (Luke 3:1-2)

Luke introduced Jesus' earthly ministry by describing the peculiar ministry of the man whose miraculous birth was outshone only by Jesus'. John the baptizer was the unlikely offspring of old Zechariah and Elizabeth. His birth was also foretold by angels (Luke 1).

Luke wrote that "God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness." This is significant because this means that he wasn't a sanctioned teacher or preacher. He didn't fit the mold of the regular religious leadership class. His message was simple, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"



According to Luke 1:2, where did John the Baptist conduct his ministry? What other light does Matthew 3:4-6 shed on John's ministry and living?

John conducted his ministry "in the wilderness," not in a synagogue or some urban venue in Jerusalem. John operated in a manner that was free from the trappings of materialism and popularity. According to Matthew, John wore some sort of garment made out of camel hair. He ate what he could find out in the wilderness—wild honey and locusts for the most part. John was strange. He wore strange clothing. He ate strange food. And he dedicated himself to a strange ministry.



Why did John live as he did? What made John sacrifice so much to fulfill his mission? How are all followers of Jesus called to live like John the Baptist did to some degree?

John did desire to gain followers, but not for himself. He lived to turn people toward the Christ. In fact, he actively pushed his own followers toward Jesus (John 1:35-39). John's ministry and strangeness was no gimmick. Those things are all indicative of a life offered up for the purposes of Christ. Think about what made John strange. He wore a camel-hair garment. He wasn't concerned with his outward appearance. He wasn't interested in seeking to make a good impression by wearing fine clothes. He was not preoccupied with satisfying his personal appetites. He ate what he could get out in the wilderness. His mission was all consuming. He would get dressed and eat around the mission, not vice versa.

John was focused on his mission and gave himself to it fully. He abandoned his life unto God and took up the mission with reckless abandon. John was a single-minded messenger.

The basis for John's sacrifice to live in the wilderness and preach the message is the same basis for Christians today when they hand a tract to someone on the street, meet a friend for coffee to share the gospel, or invite neighbors over to hear their testimony. It was the basis for Paul's focus as well.

Paul wrote to the Philippian church, "But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8). John, Paul, and faithful Christians today live sacrificial lives for the sake of the mission of Christ because of the immense value they place on Christ. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the buried treasure found by the man who went and sold all he had so he could purchase the field and obtain the treasure (Matt. 13:44).



Application: Where do you need to sacrifice for the sake of following Jesus?

## 2. Bold (Luke 3:3)

John the Baptist sacrificed a great deal for the sake of Christ. He dressed strangely. His food was meager. He was imprisoned. Finally, he was beheaded. But John was no weakling who was trampled on by those in power, forced to suffer. He suffered because of his boldness.




What evidence do we have of John's boldness from these verses?

Luke reported that John “went into all the vicinity of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Don’t rush past this. When was the last time you went into the streets of your neighborhood, nearest grocery store parking lot, or city park and loudly proclaimed the message of the gospel? It takes an unwavering confidence and holy boldness to proclaim an open-air message to perfect strangers.

According to other gospel accounts, John’s reputation spread and the crowds grew. It wasn’t long before the religious elite ventured out to assess the situation. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the two preeminent sects of the day, were in for a surprise. When John saw them he said: “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance. And don’t presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” The Pharisees and Sadducees were well-respected and led the nation of Israel’s devotion to and understanding of God. They certainly weren’t accustomed to being called names and called out by a wild man with no credentials to speak of.

John told the truth clearly, even when it posed a great risk to himself. This is boldness illustrated in vivid detail. This same boldness was shared by the apostles as well. Early in their ministry, Peter and John were detained by Jewish leadership (Acts 4). They boldly testified to the council before they were finally released, but not without a stern warning. When they returned to the believers, Luke reports that they lifted their voice in prayer and, among other things, prayed these words, “And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness” (Acts 4:29).

 Where is there a need for Christian boldness today?

The West was largely Christian for many years. While this Christianity may have been predominantly cultural, it still meant that Christians, Christian churches, and Christian values enjoyed a prominent place in society. However, this has shifted dramatically over the past several decades. Christians are increasingly looked upon with disdain and labeled as bigoted, narrow-minded, and intolerant. The boldness of John the Baptist and the apostles is necessary now more than ever for Christians living in the West. We would do well to add the prayer, “Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness” to their daily devotion to the Lord. Christians must be bold to make the most of opportunities this Christmas season to testify of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



The boldness of John the Baptist, the apostles, and Christians throughout history has been based on robust confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. Christian boldness is not based on confidence in one's self; that would be foolhardiness. Rather, Christian boldness is based on God's power, that's why it is possible to be both bold and humble.

- Application: Where do you have a need for boldness for Christ's sake? How might you seek this boldness from Him rather than seeking to stir it up yourself?

### 3. Humble (Luke 3:4-6)

John the Baptist's sacrifice revealed how much he valued Christ. His boldness revealed his confidence in God. His humility revealed his clarity about himself.

- What did John the Baptist reveal about his mission in verses 11-12? What made John the Baptist humble?

#### Prepare the Way

The quotation from Is 40:3-5 shows that John was the forerunner of the Messiah (prepare the way for the Lord; see Mal 3:1; 4:5). The apocalyptic language figuratively depicts the earth becoming level (every mountain ... made low) and all paths straight before the coming Christ.

John's mission and ministry were all about getting people to look at Christ. He made an astounding statement in verse 11 when he said, "I am not worthy to remove his sandals," referring to Christ. What he meant was that he was not even worthy to be Jesus' servant, His slave. As the moon produces no light of its own but only reflects the light of the sun, so John was not the light, but he came to bear testimony of the light, Christ.

John the Baptist was a humble man because he was keenly aware of two key truths. First, he knew that he was a mortal man, a dependent creature in need of forgiveness. John the Baptist, though he lived sacrificially and boldly for Christ, knew that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. He knew that there were none who were righteous, not even him (Rom. 3:10,23). Second, he knew the glory of Christ. In Matthew 3:11, he said, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I . . . He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

- How would you define humility? Why is it important for Christians to be humble?

To be humble is to be aware of one's desperate dependence on another and then lean into it. Christians who are humble look only to Christ for their provision in body and soul. They are like Paul who said, "I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships,

persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Christians who are humble recognize their weakness and need, causing them to trust in the Lord with all their hearts. When they cling to Christ in faith, then they are strong and are able to be bold for the gospel and sacrifice for the gospel. Humble, bold, and sacrificial witnesses of Christ are pleasing to the Father and are used to draw the lost to Himself.

- Application: Where do you need to grow in humility? How does further reflection on the gospel help us to do this?

## Conclusion

The Christmas season is an excellent time for Christians to humble themselves before the Father and to witness of Jesus Christ with boldness, no matter what the sacrifice. John the Baptist provided a helpful and challenging example to believers today who desire to give testimony of Christ during the holiday season.

- Would you say you regularly sacrifice for the sake of Christ? What do you need to sacrifice this Advent season that others might hear the truth about Jesus?
- How might you seek boldness to pursue gospel conversations with those around you during the Christmas season? What makes this difficult for you?
- How might true humility give us further opportunities to point others to Jesus?

## Prayer of Response

*Pray that our group would be focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ this holiday season. Pray that our worship and adoration for Jesus would compel us to humbly, boldly, and sacrificially bear witness of Him to others. Pray that God would grant many opportunities to share the good news of Christ with others. Ask the Lord to make you bold when those opportunities arise.*

## Additional Resources

- *The Dawning of Indestructible Joy: Daily Readings for Advent* by John Piper
- *Be Compassionate* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Luke* by Robert Stein

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- A Gift of Humility

### Main Passages

- Luke 3:7-18

### Session Outline

1. Stern Warning (Luke 3:7-9)
2. Clear Encouragement (Luke 3:10-14)
3. Hearty Deflection (Luke 3:15-18)

### Memorize

*<sup>3</sup> He went into all the vicinity of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:*

- Luke 3:3-4

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Matthew 3:1-12
- Tuesday - 1 Peter 3:15
- Wednesday - Romans 1:16
- Thursday - Psalm 96:3
- Friday - Romans 6:23
- Saturday - 2 Corinthians 5:20

# Historical Context of Luke

## Purpose

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched (1:3), selective presentation of the person and life of Jesus Christ, designed to strengthen the faith of believers (1:3–4) and to challenge the misconceptions of unbelievers, especially those from a Greek background. Its portrait of Jesus is well balanced, skillfully emphasizing his divinity and perfect humanity.

## Author

The author of the Third Gospel is not named. Considerable evidence points to Luke as its author. Much of that proof is found in the book of Acts, which identifies itself as a sequel to Luke (Ac 1:1–3). A major line of evidence has to do with the so-called “we” sections of the book (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; 28:1–16). Most of Acts is narrated in third-person plural (“they,” “them”), but some later sections having to do with the ministry of the apostle Paul unexpectedly shift to first-person plural (“we,” “us”). This indicates that the author had joined the apostle Paul for the events recorded in those passages. Since there are no “we” passages in the Gospel of Luke, that fits with the author stating that he used eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus (1:2), indicating he was not such an eyewitness himself.

Since Luke wrote both the Third Gospel and the book of Acts (Ac 1:1–3), it is relevant to consider the dating of both books together. The events at the end of Acts occurred around AD 62–63. That is the earliest point at which Acts could have been written. If Acts was written in the early AD 60s from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned for two years (Ac 28:30), the Third Gospel could date from an earlier stage of that period of imprisonment. The other reasonable possibility is during Paul’s earlier two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (Ac 24:27). From that location, Luke would have been able to travel and interview the eyewitnesses to Jesus’s life and ministry who were still alive.

## Setting

Traditionally, the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after both Matthew and Mark. Those who date Matthew and Mark in the AD 60s or 70s have tended to push the dating of Luke back to the AD 70s or 80s.

## Special Features

The Gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. Focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, this Gospel is part one of a two-part history, the book of Acts being part two. Both were dedicated to “most honorable Theophilus” (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1).

## Extended Commentary

### Luke 3:1-6

3:1-2. Historian Luke faithfully set out the historical conditions Jesus and John faced as they ministered. Luke introduced us to the historical odds stacked against Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. He introduced the enemies, the government leaders whose opposition Jesus faced throughout his ministry. Tiberius Caesar ruled Rome from a.d. 14 to 37. Luke thus placed John's ministry in a.d. 28–29. Tiberius excelled as a military commander and governmental administrator, although his problems with the Roman Senate led him to abandon Rome for the isle of Capri from a.d. 26 until his death in a.d. 37. Luke mentioned Tiberius to help his patron Theophilus set Jesus in universal history and to show his readers that the gospel was not just a Jewish matter but had universal importance. Eventually Jesus would have to face Roman authority, not Tiberius but Pontius Pilate.

Pilate haunted Jesus throughout his ministry, though as ruler of Galilee Herod had opportunity to question him (23:6–12). John's ministry had a different political locale: Perea. He dealt with Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Antipas inherited Galilee and Perea from his father and ruled there from 4 b.c. to a.d. 39 when the emperor Gaius exiled him. Herod's mother Malthace was a Samaritan and raised her sons Antipas and Archelaus in Rome. Antipas at times placated the Jews and at other times antagonized them. He married the daughter of the king of Nabatea, then divorced her to marry Herodias, his own niece and wife of Antipas's half brother. Aretas of Nabatea defeated Antipas in battle. John and other Jews attacked him for a marriage they considered unlawful (Lev. 18:13, 16; 20:21). Herod Antipas retaliated against John by imprisoning him (v. 20).

Herod Philip was another son of Herod the Great who inherited Batanaea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulonitis, and other territory, ruling from 4 b.c. to a.d. 33/34. Known for his desire for justice and as a builder, he created Caesarea Philippi. He married Antipas's daughter, Salome (see Mark 6:22).

Lysanias ruled Abilene, west of Damascus, but brief mention of him in Josephus and in an inscription from Abila give us scant information about Lysanias. Luke apparently mentioned him to give a feeling of completeness to his historical setting.

Jesus and John faced another power structure—the Jewish religious leaders. Here Annas and Caiaphas ruled supreme. Quirinius (see 2:2) appointed Annas high priest in Jerusalem about a.d. 6. He served until Valerius Gratus removed him from office in a.d. 15. His son-in-law Caiaphas (John 18:13), and five of his sons also became high priest. Annas remained the priestly power broker and leader of opposition to Jesus and the early church even after he no longer held office (see John 18:12–24; Acts 4:6).

Joseph Caiaphas was appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus about a.d. 18 and was removed about a.d. 36 by Vitellius, thus actually serving during the ministries of John and Jesus, though Annas retained great influence. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation (John

11:47–53). He apparently cooperated closely with the Roman authorities throughout his term of office, seemingly not challenging Pilate. He also established the practice of allowing vendors to sell their wares in the temple.

In this political and religious setting, God renewed his activity in human history. He gave his word to John just as he had to the prophets of old. Such word came in the desert where John lived (see 1:80). Political and religious activity centered in urban Jerusalem. God’s activity centered in the desolate wilderness of the Jordan River. The remainder of Luke’s Gospel shows which activity proved most effective.

3:3. God often mystifies people when he acts. Four hundred years after Malachi, another prophet appears. What an appearance! People left the civilization of the city and came to him in the wilderness. They had to search him out, for he did not stay in one place. His message drew them to him. It was simple, but haunting: Be baptized. Why would a Jew be baptized? Perhaps Gentile baptism had entered Judaism by this time. Certainly the strange people at Qumran loved to purify people with water. John called for more than immersing one’s body. He called for cleansing one’s soul, admitting the wrongs done against God and against other people and turning away from such actions and attitudes. Yes, pious Jews must admit they, not just Gentiles, are sinners.

According to John, even religious leaders had to escape their pious pretense of pleasing God and seek God’s forgiveness. Why? Not just to establish a right relationship with God, what Christians would term salvation. No, John’s baptism qualified a person to meet the One to come. In God’s special time of activity, John consistently played the role of preparing. His baptism prepared people to meet the holy Son of God and receive the good news of salvation that he would bring.

3:4–6. Strange activities renew God’s prophetic actions and prepare the way for the Worthy One. At least, that is what John said. What authority did he have to make such claims? He rested completely on the authority of Scripture. As seen in chapters 1–2, Luke sought at each step to show that God’s good news is based on God’s old news. Isaiah 40:3–5 promised Old Testament Israel God’s deliverance from Babylonian exile along a path God would provide in the wilderness. John’s audience was promised an even greater experience of deliverance—salvation from sin. Such salvation was not a secret that God hid in the wilderness. It was a salvation God was proclaiming for all mankind (literally, “all flesh”).

God is consistent. He sticks to his purposes. He fulfills his word and then uses the word to bring new fulfillment and meaning to a new generation. For John’s generation, salvation came in the same setting as for the exiles: the wilderness. It came in a new way. People did not have to cross the dry desert between Babylon and Palestine. They had to cross the hard line from self-centered religious pride and piety to humble acceptance of baptism based on confession of their sins. Then they would be ready to see the salvation God had prepared in Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Butler, Trent C., and Max Anders. *Luke*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

## Author Bio

### Trent Butler (Luke)

Trent C. Butler is a freelance author and editor. He served ten years on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and for twenty-two years as editor and editorial director for Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay. He wrote the Word Biblical Commentary volume on Joshua, the Layman's Bible Book Commentary on Isaiah, the Holman Old Testament Commentaries on Isaiah and Hosea through Micah, and the Holman New Testament Commentary on Luke. He served on the editorial Board of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and edited the Holman Bible Dictionary. Dr. Butler has a Ph.D. in biblical studies and linguistics from Vanderbilt University, has done further study at Heidelberg and Zurich, and has participated in the excavation of Beersheba.

### Max Anders (Luke)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at [www.maxanders.com](http://www.maxanders.com) to help people grow spiritually.

### John Piper (The Dawning of Indestructible Joy: Daily Readings for Advent)

John Piper is founder and teacher of [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is the author of more than 50 books, and more than 30 years of his preaching and teaching is available free of charge at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

### Warren Wiersbe (Be Compassionate)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of *Back to the Bible*, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### Robert Stein (Luke)

Robert H. Stein (PhD, Princeton Theological Seminary), now retired, most recently served as senior professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously taught at Bethel Seminary. A world-renowned scholar of the Synoptic Gospels, he is the author of several books, including *Mark in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, *Luke*, and *Jesus the Messiah*.