

Community
Group
study guide

LUKE
JESUS FOR EVERYONE

Pregame series
12th January 2020



Before every major sporting event there is the pregame show, which provides information for those who are both knowledgeable and inexperienced so that when kick off takes place they can more fully understand what is taking place and enjoy the game more.

In this series we are going to look at four stories which take place before Jesus kicks off His ministry, and Luke gives us these stories so when Jesus does start His ministry we have all the information we need to be on board with Him from the beginning.

However, unlike many sports pregame shows which simply have to fill time, Luke isn't interested in giving us stories for the sake of filling time, but he tells us about plays which take place which get us excited about who Jesus might be and cheering for Him when His ministry starts.



3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.*

*5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,*

6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

7 He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee

from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 9 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" 11 And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, 16 John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

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

Luke 3:1–20 (ESV)

**ISRAEL AT THE TIME
OF JESUS**

1ST CENTURY AD



Commentary

So far in Luke we have switched back and forth from John's story (the visit to Zechariah in the temple by the Angel Gabriel), to Jesus' story (Gabriel's visit to Mary) to John's birth, and then we have had a long section focused on Jesus - the trip to Bethlehem, His birth, His presentation in the temple, and then the story of His trip to Jerusalem when He was twelve. Now we switch back again to John as Luke gets us ready to introduce Jesus' ministry.

A prophet hasn't been heard in Israel for four hundred years, so naturally when John burst on the scene there is all sorts of speculation about who he is and why he has come. Luke sets the context for John's story by giving us the emperor of the Roman empire, the rulers of the regional kingdoms, the local Roman governor, and religious leaders, and it can be determined to be around 28 AD.

We have no stories of John's childhood whatsoever, and there has been a lot of speculation that he came from the Essenes, who were a sect of Judaism that wanted to get back to God. To do this they separated themselves from society, and lived in communities which rigorously practiced following the law. In order to join an Essene community there were a number of steps you had to go through to prove you were committed. Part of the Essene ritual was a water baptism, but this was a self baptism to indicate purity. While John may have been influenced by the Essenes it is by no means clear he was one, and his baptism was entirely different to theirs.

John of course reminds us of Elijah; his clothing is similar and he appears out of the wilderness calling God's people to repen-

tance.

John quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, he has come to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, where all flesh will see His salvation.

John is to prepare the way through a baptism of repentance.

What is repentance? the word *μετάνοια* means to turn around, change one's mind, or think differently about something. John's warning is that people had not been living rightly in God's sight and they need to stop doing that - repent and be baptised.

With repentance comes forgiveness, and baptism is merely an outward symbol of an inward state. As the people come flocking out into the wilderness to receive John's baptism he warns them that mere ritualism is not repentance, that has been one of the problems all along. John also tells them that they can't rely on their ancestry either, just because Abraham obeyed God and was the friend of God, doesn't mean that automatically makes them God's people if they don't keep God's ways.

The people want to know what does repentance look like? John tells them it is expressed in generosity, and treating others fairly and justly.

Is John the one they have been waiting for? No, John says there is one coming after him who he is not worthy to touch his sandals, and has a baptism of Spirit and fire, which will bring judgement.

Not everyone is on board with repentance however, King Herod, just like King Ahab with Elijah doesn't want to hear because he is in an unlawful relationship with his brother's ex wife and John calls on him to repent, but Herod responds by locking John up.

Group Study

Open the group with prayer and discuss how you have used your application from last week's study in your life, and what you have learned from it.

Talk about a time when you have seen someone on the street calling for repentance. For instance when I was a kid in London I remember an older man who would parade up and down Oxford street with a sandwich board, "Repent for the end of the world is near."

How did that make you feel?

Did anyone around them pay much attention to what they heard?

Why do you think that was?

Have you ever had a time where an alarm bell has sounded and you haven't paid attention to it? Why didn't you?

Why are we called to repent?

How are repentance and forgiveness related to one another?

Read Isaiah chapter forty

Discuss how the verses Luke quotes fit into the the context of the chapter and repentance and forgiveness.

Read the following passage:

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:37–41 (ESV)

What is the proper response to hearing the word of God?

What does baptism represent?

How does repentance open the door for God's mercy and grace?

John says there should be evidence of tangible "fruit" with our repentance. What do you think those should be?

John warns the people that if they don't repent the one coming after him not only has a baptism of the Spirit but of fire - judgement and will winnow out the chaff (the non repentant)

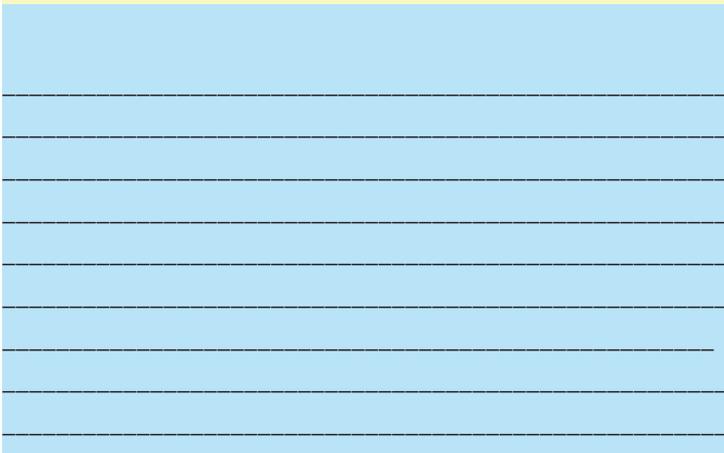
How can we do the ground work of calling people to repentance?

Personal study time

Take some time this week to using the following passages and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything you need to repent of.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:5–10 (ESV)



3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

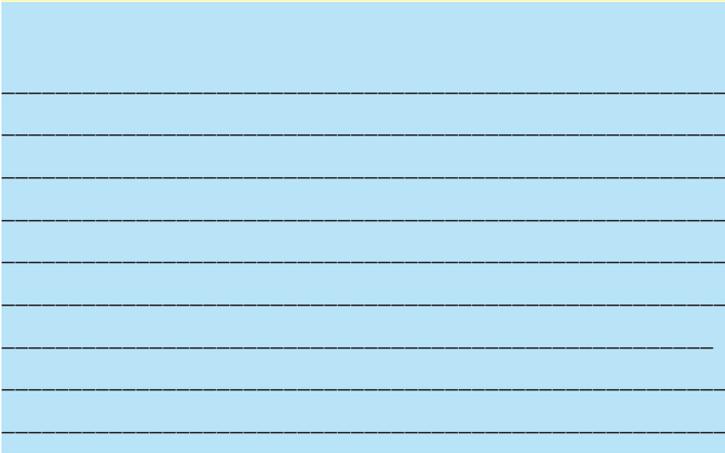
“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

Hebrews 12:3–10 (ESV)



8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:8–13 (ESV)

A light blue rectangular area containing several horizontal dashed lines, serving as a writing space.

KIDS CORNER



Preparing your heart for God

1. Have you ever really wanted to be close to someone?

We all want good relationships in our lives. Maybe there's someone you'd want to spend every day with, and you've tried to learn all about them. You know that they are always there for you, and you always have their back, too. It's a special thing to have a close friendship like that. But, could you imagine if that friend was mean to you, or hurt you, or lied to you? Your relationship would be damaged! That's what sin does to our relationship with God. When we have a bunch of selfish, hurtful, dishonest thoughts and actions in our lives, we're being mean to our loving Lord and blocking our relationship with Him.

So, how do we get close to God even though we sin? This is where repentance comes in. When we "repent" from our sins, we're sorry for doing what's wrong, and so we firmly choose to

stop. This is what John the Baptist encouraged people to do. He knew that once they made that decision, the Lord would cleanse the sin right out of their hearts and begin an amazing relationship with them. It's how they prepared their hearts for God, and it's the first step to being close with Him.

2. Why is repentance so important?

3. Do you want to repent from doing what's wrong?

