

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

PASTOR SANDY ADAMS

LUKE 2-3

Most moms have a book stuffed full of photos and mementos. The baby book chronicles the early years of her child's life. It's a cherished keepsake.

Apparently, Mary kept a baby book on her firstborn son, Jesus.

After Jesus' birth, Luke tells us, “*(Mary) kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.*” Either literally or figuratively she compiled a baby book.

And this was surely a primary source Luke used to gather information. While Paul was incarcerated in Caesarea, Luke toured the countryside researching the life and times of Jesus. Imagine him sitting down with Mary, and watching the old woman pull out the Son of God's tattered baby book.

Chapter 2 records the birth of Jesus. “*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*” Augustus, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, was one of Rome's most successful emperors.

It was said, “*He came to a Rome made of bricks and left it a city of marble.*”

Augustus transformed the whole empire with his mighty armies and extensive roads. Even a salad was named after him, *the Caesar Salad...* 😊

His given name was Octavius, but in 27 BC the Roman Senate came to him with several titles – “*king,*” “*emperor,*” “*dictator.*” He chose “*Augustus,*” “*the revered one.*” Obviously, he didn't lack for ego. He claimed to be a god.

In fact, this census was prompted by his ego. Augustus wanted to demonstrate the vastness of his kingdom, and inflate an already bloated pride.

Yet here's the irony... The man who thought he was a god, and acted to prove his supremacy was in reality being manipulated by *the one true God.*

Some 700 years earlier Micah, the Hebrew prophet, foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Now God has a problem... Mary is about to deliver her Son, and she's 100 miles from the God-appointed maternity ward.

A still small voice won't be enough to prompt Joseph to take his waddling wife on a 3 day donkey ride. Nothing short of a royal edict will move them...

Yet that's exactly what God arranges. The arrogant Caesar in Rome flexes his muscle and expects the whole world to squeeze. In reality *he's just a puppet on a string.* The shots are being called in heaven - not Rome.

Caesar's decree is the only reason Joseph would uproot his pregnant wife from her home and risk the rugged journey to his hometown of Bethlehem.

Notice too, while the world's eyes were on Rome and Augustus, the attention of heaven was on a peasant couple traveling down the Rift Valley from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I'm sure Rome and its Caesar dominated the day's headlines - while Joseph and Mary weren't even a back page story.

Realize the news that interests this world isn't always what interests God.

The kindness of a little old lady, the faithfulness of a father to his kids, an offering given to your church may not get reported in the AJC, but God sees.

History's most important event is about to occur in Bethlehem - angels will look on - but not a single reporter or camera will be there to cover the story.

Verse 4 "Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child." Ladies, imagine you're at full term, riding a donkey, over rocky terrain, for 72 hours. How *many restroom stops did Joseph make?*

The rigors of the journey may've been what triggered Mary's labor.

"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths..." Hebrew moms wrapped their babies in mummy-like shrouds to simulate the warmth of the womb. Mary wrapped Jesus, "and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem no one rolled out the red carpet. Instead doors slammed in their face. Not even the Econolodge had a room for the Son of God. Joseph finally got a *manager* to offer a *manger*.

It reminds me of the Jewish lady traveling through an extremely anti-Semitic area of New England. Every hotel had signs that advertised, "*Vacancy.*" But because she was Jewish, she kept getting turned away.

Finally, one clerk was honest, "*Lady, we just don't rent to Jews here.*" Mrs. Rosenberg answered, "*But I'm a Christian. I've converted.*"

The clerk didn't believe her. She suggested a test. He said, "*Ok, why do we celebrate Christmas?*" She answered, "*It's Jesus' birthday.*" "Well, where was Jesus born?" "*Bethlehem.*" He still wasn't convinced. "*Where did they lay Him?*" "*In a manger.*" This time he pushed a little too far. "*Alright, why did they lay Jesus in a manger?*" Finally, Mrs. Rosenberg lost it! She shouted out, "*Because a jerk like you wouldn't give a Jewish woman a room for the night.*"

And here's my question for you - *is there room in your life for Jesus?* Don't repeat the innkeeper's infamous mistake. Open up your life to Jesus!

Visit Bethlehem today and under the Church of the Nativity you walk down into a series of first century caves. At the time they were located on the outskirts of the city. These caves served as stables for the livestock.

Even today it's cold, musky, smelly... probably the sight of Jesus' birth.

Years later when the little boy Jesus left the backdoor open, Mary was tempted to shout, "*Shut the door. You weren't born in a barn.*" But He was.

God's Son, Lord of life had peasants for parents. He was born in a stable. No doctor or midwife oversaw His birth. His first bassinet was a feed trough. The birth announcement came not to royal dignitaries - but to lowly, despised, grungy shepherds.

Can you imagine a more ironic way to stage history's most important event? It was as if God was defying every human convention.

Take note, the King of Heaven came to earth - not with worldly glitz and glamour – He came humbly... and He lived the way He came.

Where do we, His servants, get off expecting *special treatment*, and *creature comforts* for serving Jesus, when the Lord Himself took the low road?

One last thought here, it was figuratively appropriate for Jesus to be laid in a manger – a feed trough. Later, Jesus called Himself “[the bread of life.](#)”

Verse 8 “[Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.](#)” Hebrew scholar, Alfred Edershiem suggests that these were not ordinary flocks, but the Temple sheep kept for sacrifice. Bethlehem is just a few miles south of Jerusalem.

Today the shepherd's fields are just off the highway between the two cities. One of the hotels we stay at – the Ramat Rachel – is in the shepherd's fields.

In a sense Jesus was a member of these sacrificial flocks.

He was the Lamb of God that would end all sacrifices. It was appropriate that the news of His birth was first announced to these Temple shepherds.

“[And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."](#) Not just Jews, but to all people! Jesus is for all people!

“[For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.](#)” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying...” I hate to disappoint, but notice they're “[saying](#)” not “[singing](#).” One of my favorite Christmas carols is “[Hark the Herald Angels Sing.](#)” But that's not accurate. They *say* not *sing*.

FYI... only twice in the Scripture do angels sing...

In Job 38:7 – at creation the angels sang for joy. And in the end - Revelation 5:8 – around God's throne – the angels join the redeemed and sing praise to the Lamb. Angels sing in the beginning and when Jesus returns. But while the world and man remain in a fallen state their lips refuse to sing.

Here they say, “[Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!](#)” It always inspires me to recall the angels came to shepherds.

Shepherds were shady characters. When shepherds came to town the police were placed on alert. When a shepherd was around you kept your hand on your wallet. A shepherd's testimony was inadmissible in a court of law.

Yet God's *peace and goodwill* first came to the worst people. The *light of God* came to *shady shepherds*. That means there's hope for people like us!

Verse 15 “[So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."](#) They weren't content with hearsay – they want to see for themselves... “[And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which](#)

was told them concerning this Child.” And once they met Jesus they didn’t sit on the news. They spread it far and wide. *Let’s do the same.*

Verse 18 “And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” I wonder what other stories Mary told Luke? Perhaps when we get to heaven we’ll have the opportunity to browse Mary’s Baby Book.

“Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.” The shepherds *praised* while Mary *pondered*. Praising and pondering are still appropriate. *Shout it out and mull it over - witness and worship.* Both responses are our example.

Verse 21 “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.” A newborn boy lacks Vitamin K – which provides the blood its clotting ability. It takes seven days for the blood to coagulate.

Yet God knew this long before modern science. The Law of Moses required that every baby boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day.

“Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Besides circumcision the Mosaic Law required a Jewish couple to observe two more ceremonies...

The mother’s purification and payment of the redemption price.

Purification required a sacrifice - usually, a lamb. If you couldn’t afford a lamb, you could opt for “*a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*” This was the poor man’s exception. *Joseph and Mary qualified for the pauper’s option.*

While in the Temple Joseph and Mary bumped into two senior citizens...

Verse 25 “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel (this was a title for the Messiah), and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”

“And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” “Christos” is Greek for *Messiah*.

“So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”

Simeon understood what most Jews at the time didn’t. He quotes Isaiah 52:10. Messiah will be a light not only to Jews, but also to Gentiles. And now that Simeon has seen the light he’s ready to close his eyes one final time.

“And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.” I would suppose this was one more addition to Mary’s Baby Book.

But Simeon wasn't through, verse 34, "Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon makes a four-fold prediction. Jesus will be **pivotal**. Every human will rise or fall on their reaction to Jesus. He'll also be **persecuted**. He's "a sign which will be spoken against..." He'll cause **pain** – especially for Mary. Verse 35, (Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also...)

Imagine Mary's heartbreak at the cross. She watched her son bleed and die. Mary was "blessed" and "highly favored," but it didn't shelter her from pain.

And Jesus will **peel** back facades and lift off masks. Simeon says, "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Jesus will be **pivotal** and **persecuted**, His life will cause His mother **pain**, and He'll **peel** back intentions.

No one will trifle with Mary's Child. He is a force to be reckoned with...

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about 84 years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Ana had been married for 7 years, but that was 84 years ago. The earliest a Jew could be married was 13 – that made Ana at least 104.

Instead of remarrying, Ana chose to give herself totally to God. She resided in the Temple, and performed a wide range of chores for the priests.

And Ana had a *bucket list*. It was short. She wanted to see her Lord.

Then it happened. "And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Verse 39 "So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth." *And what was it like to parent God?* In his book "God Came Near," Max Lucado tries to answer that question. He has a chapter entitled, "Twenty-five Questions for Mary."

Here's a few... "When Jesus saw a rainbow did He ever mention a flood?

Did you ever feel awkward teaching Him how He created the world?

When He saw a lamb being led to the slaughter, did He act differently?

How did He act at funerals?... Did the thought ever occur to you that the God to whom you were praying was asleep under your own roof?... Did you ever catch Jesus gazing at the flesh on His arm while holding a clod of dirt?

And did you ever think, "That's God eating my soup?" Mary probably had answers to these questions tucked away in her Baby Book.

What life was like for Jesus growing up we're not sure. He was certainly taught the Scriptures from an early age. He also learned a trade. Jesus' followed in his foster father's footsteps. He became a carpenter like Joseph.

Though a tiny town, Nazareth sat at the crossroads of three major trade routes. Strangers in town exposed Jesus to different people and cultures.

In addition, Nazareth set just across the valley, about 4 miles southeast of a town called "Sepphoris" - the summer retreat for the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Tradition has it as the place Mary spent her childhood. Perhaps Mary had relatives in Sepphoris and visited often. Joseph and Jesus may've found carpentry work in the bustling town. It's possible that in Sepphoris, a young Jesus could've been taught by the most brilliant minds in Judaism.

Verse 40 records what Luke does tell us, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

Jesus exhibited *usual spiritual strength* and *keen spiritual discernment*. It was obvious from a very early age that the hand of God was upon His life.

I'm sure Luke spent days browsing Mary's Baby Book. Why he didn't record more we're not sure, but he closes chapter 2 with a specific event from Jesus' early life that he probably thought indicative of Jesus' whole childhood.

Verse 41 "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover." All Jewish males were required to journey to Jerusalem three times a year – for the three major feasts – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

"And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him."

Before you report Joseph and Mary to DFACS understand a Jewish pilgrimage. Families traveled in caravans - the women up front - the men and boys in the rear. Mary thought Joseph had Him. Joseph thought Mary had Him. They didn't realize their mistake until they stopped that night to camp.

In verse 46 they return to Jerusalem. "Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Jesus was quizzing the scholars.

Imagine an episode of "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" In this case a 6th grader. Jesus was 12, but His grasp of Scripture astonished the rabbis.

"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us?" Or *why did you inconvenience us?*

"Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.

And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" They should've known He'd be attending to heavenly business. Here's the question for us - *in whose business are we embroiled?* Are we so wrapped up in our stuff that we neglect to serve God?

"But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart." Luke included this story to show us that even at 12 years old Jesus had a sense of who He was and what He'd come to do. In John 8:29 He'll later say, "I always do those things that please (the Father)." That was true of Jesus throughout His life.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Notice, He grew in four ways: **intellectually, physically, spiritually, socially...** Here’s a good model for parents - *a balanced upbringing*. Are your children growing “*in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*”?

Chapter 3, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests...”

Luke is fixing a point on the timeline. When historians connect these dots they arrive at 29 AD. This meant Jesus and John were around 35 years old.

At that time, “The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” John was a priest, yet he abandoned the priesthood earlier on.

The religious establishment of his day had become corrupt, and greedy. They enjoyed a life of ease and opulence. John sought just the opposite...

He lived in the wilderness. No fancy robes – he wore a camel’s hair coat. He dined on locusts and honey, a poor man’s dish. Sun-dried locust taste like shrimp - honey helps. Away from civilization – amidst the rigors of the desert - John developed a simpler, stronger, more authentic walk with God.

Now the time has come for Him to deliver His message...

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins...” Two elements characterized John’s message: **repentance** and **baptism**. Turn from sin and turn to God. Then prove your sincerity publically by being baptism. This was John’s rap.

And this was unusual. Only Gentiles were baptized as a sign of conversion. For Jews baptism was merely ceremonial. Yet here John is baptizing Jews. *These Jews were admitting that they were no more righteous than a Gentile!*

In verse 4 Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3, “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight.’” The OT predicted Messiah will have an advance man. John was the God-appointed forerunner.

“Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” Before a foreign king visited a country, the DOT was sent to level hills - and straighten dangerous bends in the road - and pave potholes. Every effort was made to smooth out the path.

In a spiritual sense this was John’s job. He prepared for Jesus’ arrival. He wanted to eliminate obstacles to faith in people’s hearts, and open the path.

And John accomplished the task with an in-your-face boldness, verse 7 “Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” John doesn’t mince words. He could care less about the status quo, or pleasing the establishment.

John compares the religious leaders of his day to a brood or family of snakes who rush out of the bushes at the first smell of a brushfire.

John was really an amazing fellow... To our knowledge he never performed a miracle – never taught in the Temple - had no affinity with a town or region – yet people flocked to hear him. He attracted great crowds... *and why?*

People sensed John had the goods. They were tired of hollow religion and hungry for God. John possessed a dedicated life, a humble attitude, an uncompromising honesty, a message from God, and the power of the Spirit.

The church today could learn a lot from John's example.

And John tells the crowd, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."

Understand John was harsh to the religious crowd – to the *self-righteous* not the *unrighteous*. Religion is all about defining good guys and bad guys.

Do this... don't do that... and pretend to be a good guy. Be a Jew... keep the Law... worship on Sunday... don't drink... be baptized... keep kosher...

Yet no matter what we do we're all bad guys. Our only hope is Jesus.

Actually, religion is a way to sidestep Jesus. If I earn enough merit badges I can guarantee a spot in heaven without worrying about putting someone else first in my life... Here the Jews based their righteousness on being children of Abraham. John says that's no big deal. God can turn *rocks* into *rabbis*.

In a day when religion was at its zenith, John hit a nerve. It's not about religion - rules and rituals. It's about turning from sin and turning to Jesus.

John says "*bear fruits worthy of repentance.*"

The Jews came to be baptized by John - but they weren't serious about turning from sin. They just wanted to be on the safe side – in case John was right. It reminds me of the soldier who wore both a cross and a Star of David.

When asked why, he answered, "*I'm taking no chances.*"

That's not turning to Jesus, and getting serious about faith. This is why John insisted on "*fruits*" or evidence I've repented. *Have I altered my friends, habits, pastimes? Have I tangibly shown that I'm willing to follow Jesus?*

Verse 9 "*And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*"

Trees with no fruit get axed. They become firewood. Just being sorry I got caught isn't real repentance. Repentance is *the desire to change*.

"So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" And here's an example of the evidence John was seeking... "He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Stop living for yourself and care about other folks.

"Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Play fair. Be honest. True repentance affects your business practices. Your confession on Sunday should show up on Monday.

"Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

Stop pushing people around to get what you want. Start thinking about eternity, not just life on earth... *does your life show fruits of repentance?*

Verse 15 “Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” A Jewish rabbi had disciples who ran all kinds of errands and did all types of menial tasks. But the one job too dirty for any disciple was removing sandals. This was reserved for a slave.

Thus, John is saying he’s not even worthy to be Jesus’ slave. By lineage John and Jesus were cousins. But spiritually they were a different breed.

John says of Jesus, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

John baptized with water. It was a baptism for repentance. It expressed a desire to change. But John was unable to impart the power to change.

For years I grew up knowing only one baptism – the baptism of repentance. Each week the pastor deciphered my sin, and pounded out God’s judgment. And I’d come to the altar and repent. I was genuinely sorry. I wanted to change, but I lacked the dynamic to do so – until I learned of *Jesus’ baptism*.

John baptized for repentance, but Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

In NASA’s early days the problem with space travel was the ability to break out of Earth’s gravitational pull. How can you produce an upward explosion greater than gravity’s downward force? *This is our problem...* We want to live pleasing to God, but sin keeps pulling us down. How do we break through?

Only Jesus can provide me this upward propulsion. He fills me with a *God-ward push* greater than sin’s *downward pull*. The Holy Spirit ignites in me strength – a spiritual thrust. We break loose from sin by living in His power.

We all need the baptism of the Spirit. And we can have it if we ask...

But Jesus also baptizes with “*fire*” – or judgment. John said, “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” Technically, John was an OT prophet, and here he follows their pattern. He merges the first and second comings of Jesus into a single prophecy.

At His first coming, Jesus came to baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

At His second coming He executes a harvest. He brings “*his winnowing fan,*” or pitchfork to separate wheat from chaff – righteous from unrighteous.

Verse 18 “And with many other exhortations (John) preached to the people.

But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.” King Herod committed adultery with his sister-in-law. They both divorced, and married each other. It was sin!

It was Jerusalem’s soap opera. *And John tuned in...* long enough to rebuke them publically. Adultery, divorce, incest - *how could John ignore such sin?*

Herod Antipas tried to *shut John up* by locking him up in prison.

But that happened later. Verse 21 takes us down to the Jordan. **“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized...”**

Once, a protestant church in New Orleans caught fire. The fire department arrived and doused the flames. The next day a fire inspector, a Roman Catholic, was surveying the scene. He tripped and fell into the baptismal pool.

It was full of water from the fire fighters’ efforts to put out the fire.

When the inspector exited he asked someone standing by, **“Who does this church belong to?”** He was told, **“Protestants.”** The wet Catholic shook his head, **“Well, I don’t know much about them, but I guess I’m one of them now.”**

Jesus was sinless and didn’t need to be baptized. He didn’t need to repent.

Yet baptism was His way of identifying with us. He blazed the trail we would follow. Jesus is the captain of salvation - the author and finisher of our faith.

He was baptized to identify with us, and we’re baptized to identify with Him.

“And while (Jesus) prayed...” Luke is the only Gospel writer to mention Jesus prayed at His baptism. Luke has a fascination with Jesus’ prayer life.

He writes, **“While He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”**

Notice, Jesus pleased the Father. I’m sure you know there’re all sorts of speculation as to how Jesus filled up his first 35 years... *What did He do? Where did He go?* Luke doesn’t tell us all we’d like to know, but he does tell us all we need to know. *Whatever He did, wherever He went, Jesus was sinless.*

Here too is a beautiful picture of the Trinity. God is one God, but He exists in three distinct persons. Here, the Son stands in the water - the Father blesses from heaven - and the Holy Spirit, as a dove, descended upon Jesus.

Verse 23, **“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli...”**

Luke says **“about 30 years of age.”** Since Herod died in 4 BC, Jesus was born beforehand. If 29 AD was the starting point, then Jesus was 33 years old when He started His ministry. We can’t be exact. Luke says **“about 30.”**

Notice too, Luke calls Jesus, Joseph’s **“supposed”** son. Joseph was His foster father. His biological dad was God. Joseph’s genealogy appears in Matthew. This is Mary’s genealogy. The father’s lineage was political. It traced the royal line. The mother’s lineage was genetic. It showed a child’s bloodline.

One other point, under Jewish law if Mary had no brothers, her husband would be considered her father’s son. Thus, **“Joseph, the son of Heli...”**

I’ll let you read the rest of the genealogy on your own.

One fact you’ll notice is that unlike Matthew’s genealogy, which goes back to Abraham - Luke’s genealogy traces all the way back to the first man, Adam.

Matthew wrote to Jews, who claimed Abraham as their father.

But Luke wrote to the Greeks - who exalted humanity. Luke’s focus on Jesus’ humanness proved to the Greeks that Jesus was the ultimate man.