

Part 16

Preparing the Way for Jesus 3:15-22

- People were amazed at John's ministry

People were amazed at John the Baptist's ministry. Many people were expecting a Messiah to come soon; so they wondered whether perhaps John was the one who was to come to rescue them ^{¶1}.

^{¶1} 3:15

1. Jesus – the One who gives the Spirit

- John's baptism an expression of repentance

- The ceremony does not convey the Spirit

- Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit

- Pentecost

1. **John pointed to Jesus as the One who gives the Spirit.** John deliberately presented himself as an altogether lower person than Jesus. '*I baptise you with water . . . He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire...*' ^{¶1}. We note that John's water-baptism is **contrasted** with baptism with the Spirit. No water-baptism conveys the Spirit. Water-baptism is an expression of God's promises; and when people get themselves baptised they are expressing repentance (in the case of John's baptism), or faith in Jesus (in the case of Christian baptism). God and man are saying something to each other through this simple ceremony. But the water does not convey the Spirit.

Jesus, says John, has an altogether greater ministry: that of baptising with the Holy Spirit ^{¶1}. Jesus is 'the Stronger One', a person with altogether greater spiritual power than John. John cannot give the Holy Spirit; nor can any other human being. Only Jesus can give the Holy Spirit.

The 'baptism with the Spirit' is what happened on the Day of Pentecost. It is the work of Jesus in which He 'pours out' the Holy Spirit upon a believer (or upon many believers at the same time), and in which there is given assurance of salvation, boldness in witness, ease in prayer, consciousness of God's love, joy unspeakable and an intense awareness of the presence of Jesus in the believer's life.

2. **John pointed to Jesus as the One who is both Saviour and Judge.** '*He shall baptise with the Spirit and with fire*', said John the Baptist. How are we meant to take the reference to fire? In the light of the surrounding references to the fire of God's judgement, John's phrase seems to mean that the coming Saviour would bring both salvation and (for those who refused salvation) the fire of God's judgement.

John speaks as a prophet. Like many of the prophets of the Old Testament he sees **everything** God will do to bring in God's kingdom. His vision of the future includes Jesus' outpouring of the Spirit and Jesus' outpouring of the fire of God's anger against sin. John has a **total** vision of Jesus as Saviour and Judge. As John's prediction was fulfilled, the salvation was before the judgement. The baptism of the Spirit is before the baptism with fire. This time-gap gave John some problems. A time came when he wondered what had happened to the baptism with fire ^{¶1}. It was this that made him doubt at one point whether Jesus really was the Messiah. Actually the 'fire' would be later than the Spirit. Jesus would be Saviour first, and return as Judge later. John pointed to one who would be Saviour and Judge ^{¶2}. This was the message he preached with great power ^{¶3}.

2. Jesus - both Saviour and Judge

- Salvation and Judgement

- A total vision

- Time gap

^{¶1} 3:16

^{¶1} 3:16

^{¶1} Luke 7:18–23

^{¶2} 3:17

^{¶3} 3:18

3. John's preaching of holiness brought him personal suffering

- Fearless preaching led to suffering imprisonment

4. John's preaching would soon give way to Jesus' preaching

- First Jesus identified with sinners
- The Holy Spirit
- Even Jesus needed the baptism with the Holy Spirit

3. John's preaching of holiness brought him into personal suffering. Luke 3:19–20 is one of a few places in Luke's Gospel where Luke tells a story out of chronological order. Mark and Matthew tell the story at a much later stage of their gospels ^{¶1}, but Luke brings this matter forward because he wants at this point to complete his picture of John the Baptist. He tells the story briefly. Luke's readers would know the story for themselves.

^{¶1} Mark 6:17–29; Matthew 14:3–12

John's preaching was detailed and fearless. He was willing to press upon Herod the need for him to be righteous in his marriage. Herod had wrongly divorced his first wife, the daughter of the Arabian king, Aretas, and he had persuaded his brother's wife to abandon her husband and marry him. John was the leader of a national movement in which many in the land were finding salvation. John was calling for repentance among all people everywhere. He could not leave such scandalous sin unrebuked. But it brought suffering into John's life. John was imprisoned. Luke tells the story here to let us see another aspect of John's character and ministry. He was a man who said what had to be said, regardless of what personal suffering it might cause him.

4. John's preaching would soon give way to Jesus' preaching ^{¶1}. Jesus was on the verge of commencing His ministry but certain things had to come first. First Jesus identified Himself with sinners. He was baptised, not in His case, to express repentance, but to put Himself among sinners who needed repentance.

^{¶1} 3:21–22

As He was obedient in this way He was given the Holy Spirit ^{¶1}. The Spirit came upon Him as He was praying. Luke likes to stress the work of the Spirit and he likes to emphasise prayer. The two themes are connected. We are likely to receive blessings of the Spirit as we pray. The disciples were in an upper room praying, when the events of the Day of Pentecost started with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

^{¶1} 3:21–22

Even Jesus needed the baptism with the Holy Spirit. As for us, so for Him the gift of the Spirit was an empowering for ministry and an assurance of sonship. He received an added confirmation of His being God's Son ('You are my beloved Son') and was also addressed as the suffering Servant of the prophecies of Isaiah (the words 'in whom I am well pleased' echo Isaiah 42:1). The Holy Spirit took the appearance of a dove. As a dove brought evidence of a new world at the time of the flood, so the dove-like Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus. The Holy Spirit's power now rests upon the man Jesus and so enable Him to bring into being a new kingdom of grace



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