

• *The story of Jesus in the four gospels*

Events at the beginning of Jesus' ministry

Luke's approach to the story

1. Luke's special interest in history

• *Luke has a great interest in the Holy Spirit*

• *Both emphases are important*

• *God's acts in history are a special feature of the Christian faith*

Each of the four gospels begins with some kind of title or introduction ^{☐1}. Then two of the gospels tell stories from Jesus' youth ^{☐2}.

At the next stage, all four gospels tell us something of the events at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. We start a section of Jesus' story which runs from about mid AD 29 to Passover AD 30.

John the Baptist has started ministering. Somewhere between mid AD 29 and Passover AD 30 John baptised Jesus ^{☐1}. Then Jesus was tempted ^{☐2}. John's Gospel lets us know that at about this time Jesus first met some of His disciples and spent time with them ^{☐3}. He visited Cana ^{☐4} and Capernaum ^{☐5}. Then in AD 30 He returned to Jerusalem for the first Passover of His ministry ^{☐6}. He cleansed the temple ^{☐7}, did many signs ^{☐8}, counselled Nicodemus ^{☐9} and for several months (perhaps April–December AD 30) ministered in Judea. The ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist were both going on at the same time ^{☐10}. Then there came a time where it was dangerous for Jesus in Judea ^{☐11}. John the Baptist was imprisoned and Jesus went to Galilee ^{☐12}. On the way he ministered in Samaria ^{☐13}. Our interest is in the way in which Luke tells the story.

1. **We notice again Luke's special interest in history.** Luke 3:1–2 finds six ways of pin-pointing exactly when it was that the ministry of Jesus began. We are told which Roman emperor was ruling, which Roman governor was working in Judea, which members of the Herod family were reigning over three areas of Israel (Galilee; Iturea and Trachonitis; Abilene), and which high priests were reigning over the Jerusalem religious scene. Luke is interested in dates and rulers. He gives a historical framework for his story.

The Christian must be interested in history if he is to be faithful to his Bible. Luke also has a great interest in the Holy Spirit. There are more references to the Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel than in Matthew and Mark. It is Luke who has a second volume which tells of the day of Pentecost and of what happened as a result.

These two emphases – history and the Holy Spirit – are equally important. Some people are only interested in the facts of the Christian faith. They look at the gospel simply as a matter of events that happened a long time ago that we believe in. Others are interested in the Holy Spirit. 'It does not matter what happened in history,' they say. 'It only matters what happens by the Holy Spirit.'

Actually both history and the Holy Spirit are equally important in our way of looking at the gospel. One of the differences between the Christian faith and the world's religions is that we believe in certain crucial events which happened in history. Jesus received the Holy Spirit when He was baptised by John; it is a fact of history. Jesus died. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit and created the Spirit-powered Church. These are all events of history. When we believe them and receive them, they become facts in our hearts as well. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus real to us **now**. But the history is first. These events happen in world-history, so that they are out in the open for anyone to see. Luke writes a history book about what happened.

^{☐1} Mark 1:1; Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:1–4; John 1:1–18
^{☐2} Matthew 1:2–2:23; Luke 1:5–2:52

^{☐1} Mark 1:2–11; Matthew 3:1–17; Luke 3:1–18, 21–22; John 1:19–34
^{☐2} Mark 1:12–13; Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13

^{☐3} John 1:35–52
^{☐4} John 2:1–11

^{☐5} John 2:12
^{☐6} John 2:13

^{☐7} 2:14–22

^{☐8} 2:23–25

^{☐9} 3:1–21

^{☐10} John 3:22–36

^{☐11} John 4:1–4

^{☐12} Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 4:12; Luke 4:14

^{☐13} John 4:5–

45

2. God acted to restore His work

• **John's upbringing was part of his preparation**

• **Full of the Holy Spirit**

• **Unusual self restraint**

• **A preacher**

• **Gathered a new community**

• **John's baptism – symbolised the cleansing of sins**

• **God – restoring his church with a new community**

2. **God acted to restore His work.** For hundreds of years there has been no great prophet. Suddenly God takes hold of a person and communicates a message to him. 'The word of God came to John ... in the wilderness' ¹.

¹ 3:2

He was the son of Zacharias, a godly priest. God gives us the right background. Sometimes God takes hold of a person whose background is entirely pagan, and uses him. Yet it is also true that sometimes spiritual parents contribute to what we later do for God. John was prepared by God to have a unique ministry. His upbringing was part of his preparation.

At this point in the story, he had been a believer for many years. We know that he was full of the Holy Spirit ¹. He had grown up as a believing young man.

¹ 1:15

He was a man who lived with unusual self-restraint. He had been led by God to live in a lonely spot, in the wilderness of Judea ¹.

¹ 3:2



He was a preacher. Spiritual restoration takes place when God raises up a preacher who will preach about sin and judgement, about salvation and the grace of God.

Here was a man who brought into being a new people ready to do God's will. It is not enough to preach. When the Church is being restored, there has to be another step. The preacher has to gather people together and get a community of people who will represent God in His world. John not only preaches; he also baptises people.

What was John's baptism? It was immersion into water. The water did not do anything. It was spiritual symbolism. The water symbolised the cleansing of sins. Getting oneself baptised expressed the fact that you were believing in John's message. It was an expression of repentance. It was a way of publicly saying 'I have changed my mind about my life. I have come to see that I must believe in the promises of God and I am trusting in what I have heard in the preaching of this man, John the Baptist.'

Because baptism was a public and visible sign it created a community, a people who been baptised by John.

When God restores His Church He sends a preacher and He enlarges His church with a new company of believers

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | <p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> |  |
|---|---|---|

These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

| Slices for the Nations | Slices for Sponsors | Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations |

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
 Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk