

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

Luke 2:21; 3:1-14; 4:1-13

Wednesday Class (1/15/24)

Today covering 3 short sections of Luke, chapters 2, 3, and 4. We're catching up, in order to create a sequential flow moving ahead

First, read Luke 2:21. This takes place right after the nativity story of Christmas.

Jesus is circumcised as any 8-day-old Jewish boy would be. Read Genesis 17:11-14.



What do you think it means that circumcision is a “sign of the covenant?”

We read here of Jesus' blood being shed for the first time, as the Law's requirement is fulfilled at his circumcision. Is this a foreshadowing of his blood being shed, as God's way of providing for our forgiveness in the New Covenant?

What does this action (having their baby boy circumcised, according to the Law) say about Jesus' parents, and the spiritual atmosphere in the family in which he was raised?

There was a fierce argument in early decades of the Christian church about whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised. Skim through Acts 15, to refresh your memory of this debate. In a sense, we could say that this issue was really settled right here in Luke 2:21. During his life, Jesus fulfilled entire the OT Law on our behalf.

The infant child of Mary and Joseph is given the name “Jesus.”

Which parent was told by the angel to name the child Jesus, and when? See Luke 1:31 and Matthew 1:21.

The name “Jesus” means *God saves*, or *God is salvation*. We might say that already, at age of 8 days, his destiny of atonement is revealed in his name. In our next section for today, Luke describes the ministry of John the Baptist. Read Luke 3:1-14.

The “15th year of Tiberius' reign” was probably 28-29 AD. The three regional rulers at this time are the sons of Herod the Great, who was on the throne when Jesus was born.

Who's really holding the power in the region at this time?

Notice that the Jewish religious leaders mentioned, as well. Luke is setting the scene for Jesus' years of ministry, by noting political Rome, political Israel, and religious Israel. All three have a significant stake in regional affairs – and in Christ's story.

Then Luke zooms in on John.

How would you describe this man, and the message he delivered?

How would you describe his appeal, or explain the crowds that gathered?

How would you respond if you came to church one Sunday, and the preacher started off his sermon with the words, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

What do you think it means that the "word of God came to John" (v. 2)?

Why do you suppose Luke mentions John as being the son of Zechariah?

Does this verse suggest that John was spending time in the wilderness before the word came to him? Why might he have been doing this? Was John anticipating his time of ministry (preparing way of Lord)?

How might he have known of his ministry role in advance?

In your mind, what does it mean to "repent" (v. 3)?

John was seeking to prepare the people for God's coming salvation in Christ. He knew that for them to be prepared, their hearts must be opened to God's message.

What do you think was John's strategy in calling the people a "brood of vipers?" (v. 7)

What do you think he's suggesting with the question, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (v. 7)

What do you suppose he meant with the words, "the wrath to come?"

What would it mean for a person to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance?" (v. 8)

Do you believe that if one turns to God, one's life should look different?

What kind of an attitude is John challenging with his words in the last two sentences of v. 8?

What was going on in the hearts of the crowd, that prompted them to ask John (v. 10), "What then shall we do?"

Notice that tax collectors and soldiers were there that day. What were they doing out in the wilderness? What might have been their interest in John's message?

Our final section of Scripture today is Luke's story about the temptation of Jesus, immediately following his baptism. Read Luke 4:1-13.

Luke tells us that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (v. 1). Are you surprised by this, since Jesus is truly God (one with Father and Spirit)?

It's interesting to note that Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days. The time period recalls Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, en route to the Promised Land. Also, we can recall Moses' 40 days on Mt. Sinai, and Elijah's 40 days on Mt. Horeb.

Where do you imagine Jesus slept during these 40 days?

In the devil's first temptation, what's the actual temptation? Why would Jesus, in that moment, have been tempted to sin? Have you ever been tempted to give in to a physical urge/hunger, in a way that's sinful?

What do you imagine was Jesus' attitude toward this temptation? Anger? Insulted? Impatient? Amused? Why do you think he only quoted Scripture, and said nothing more?

In the second temptation, what was the actual temptation? Why would Jesus, in that moment, have been tempted to sin? Have you ever been tempted to acquire worldly status/prestige/power?

In the third temptation, Satan make a repeated challenge to Jesus' identity. Why do you think he takes this approach?

Why does Jesus say nothing except to quote Scripture?