

Luke 3

Here we are again. St. Luke begins by putting things in their historical setting (v1-2). John the baptist is now a man and his job is to preach repentance. John the baptist was not a very popular man, but he didn't seek popularity. His words to the multitude that had gathered was to call them all a "generation of vipers" (v7). John didn't mince his words, he told it how it is. Today we need to know how it is. Our situation isn't good just like it wasn't good for John's audience. Read what John says to the people (v7-9). John's words relate to us and our day, just as much as it did to the people of his day. His words weren't popular then and they aren't popular now. People today say "How can we make the Church and Christianity relate to people outside the Church?" John tells us that there is no complicated formula. He tells us to simply tell it as it is. The truth is never popular, especially when it relates to our sorry state, but the only way people will change is if they know the truth. The people around John could have turned against him, even gotten violent with him. But they responded in the correct way, they asked "What shall we do then?" (v10) They recognized their predicament. We find later that others were not so accommodating (v19-20).

John then gives teaching on how the people can put things like Charity (v11), Fairness (v13) and Peace (v14) into action. People today claim that religion causes hatred, persecution and violence in the world, and some manifestations of religion do show this. But listening to John we can see that these things are abuses of what true religion is all about. That there are distinct manifestations of religion and that many abuses are caused by opposition to the true faith, within and outside religion. Notice how John teaches the soldiers against violence (v14).

John was the forerunner of Jesus (v15-17). He was also a key witness to the fact that Jesus was and is the Messiah (v15-22). The question that each and every person needs to ask is "What do we make of Jesus?" Was he just a person who went around doing good? Was he just a good moral teacher? did he even exist? Was he the Messiah, the Son of the living God? Its not enough to say "well I have my belief and you have your belief and lets leave it at that", as though every belief is equally valid and as long as I'm a good person then that's enough. We all have to decide what we make of Jesus. Is He Lord and Saviour or is He something else, or even nothing to us. This is a question of truth and whether sooner or later, we all have to decide. John made his mind up, "I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose sandals, I am not worthy to unloose, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire". (v 16). John was thrown into prison because of his firm belief and because he spoke the truth against Herod the tetrarch. (v19-20).

Verses 23 to 38 trace Jesus' ancestry, giving us His family tree. We can cross-reference this with the old testament, to show that Jesus was a real person, he had a real history, he was a Jew and although He was fully God, he was also fully human.

A Prayer:- Most Gracious God, give us the strength to speak the truth, even when it makes us feel unpopular and when people turn against us. Help us to realize that no one is too great, too powerful to hear the truth and that not everyone is unwilling to listen to your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Philip Catherall.