

LESSON 10 JOHN'S PREACHING

Our lesson can be found in Luke 3, where we find a list of the rulers of the time Jesus and John began their teaching. We need to learn a little about these rulers because their history becomes a great part of the story of Jesus' life and death.

Tiberius Caesar was the emperor. For almost 200 years, the title of Caesar was used by the emperors of Rome. There were 11 other Roman emperors that lived within New Testament times. Augustus sent the decree for taxation (Luke 2:1). Tiberius ruled when John began his preaching. Claudius ruled during the famine predicted by Agabus. He also forced Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome (Acts 11:28, 18:2). Nero is the one to whom Paul appealed in Acts 25:10-12.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. Herod ruled over Galilee, and his brother Philip ruled over other areas. They are called tetrarchs, meaning that were rulers over $\frac{1}{4}$ of the country and were considered subordinate to the other rulers.

Annas and Caiphas were high priests. This is interesting because there was only one high priest that was supposed to rule. Remember that the priesthood had been established at Mount Sinai when God gave the law to Moses. The priest had very specific duties, but over time the office of priest had been corrupted. Though Annas had been thrown out of office about 15 years before this, he still seems to have some power. One other fact about the high priest; he also served as president of the Sanhedrin.

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiphas. Caiphas was ruling at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, yet the people took Jesus to Annas for judgment. This was a political move on the part of the Jewish rulers. They were interested in complete support for their plan to eliminate the man that claimed to be King of the Jews.

John received a message from God (verse 2) while he was in the wilderness. He was sent to the Jordan River, and there he preached baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This would have been just before the baptism of Jesus. There are some questions that the people asked John that are important to our study.

The first question they asked him was, "What shall we do?" This question was in response to their using the fact that they were children of Abraham as proof of their belonging to God. John makes it clear that being of Abraham's seed was not

enough, and the people wanted to know what to do. The apostle Paul makes this same point in Galatians 3:7, and 29.

John then teaches them a lesson with a simple illustration. It is a lesson on unselfishness. He says if a man has two coats, and he sees someone without a coat, he should share with him. If he sees someone who needs food, he should share his food with him.

John's message, like that of Jesus' message was to all people. John preaches to whomever wanted to listen, and the result was that publicans (tax collectors) came to him to be baptized. Their question is the same, "Teacher, what shall we do?" Soldiers also ask him, "And we, what shall we do?" The answer to the tax collectors is, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." There is no specific answer given to the soldiers, but they might well be guilty of extorting money for special favors, just as the tax collectors.

Jesus then identifies the one mightier than He, one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This is a direct reference to what happens in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit descends on the apostles on Pentecost.

We are then introduced to a problem that has arisen with Herod. Philip, Herod's brother had a wife named Herodias. She was the granddaughter of Herod the Great. She had divorced Philip so she could marry Herod Antipas. John, in his teaching, condemns this relationship and exposes Herod for other evil things he has done. Of course, this doesn't make Herod happy, and he puts John in prison. This is the point where Jesus' teaching increases. Remember that John said he would decrease and Jesus would increase.

As a Jewish leader, Herod is to be bound by Jewish law, including "Thou shalt not commit adultery". (Exodus 20:14). He has violated that law and has thus put himself in an awkward position with the Jewish people and with being exposed publicly.

Luke tells us in verse 23 that Jesus began His teaching at the age of 33. Then Luke gives us the genealogy of Jesus through His earthly father, Joseph, going all the way back to Adam. Matthew is the only other writer of the Gospels that gives a genealogy, and he traces it forward from Abraham. It is fascinating to read through these to see who was in the lineage of Christ.

FOR DISCUSSION: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE LESSON?

1. What right did John have to criticize Herod for his marriage to Herodias?
2. Look at the lineage of Jesus, particularly from Abraham to. Discuss how God used His plan in the lives of these people to execute the coming of Jesus.
3. How do we see the salvation of man even in the sins of some in Jesus' earthly ancestors? (Jacob's brothers, Rahab, David, Solomon).
4. How can we apply John's teaching about sharing in our daily lives?
5. Discuss how we can get those we teach to ask, "what shall we do"?