



‘But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’
2 Peter 3:18

December 13

Advent 3

Gospel reading: Luke 3:7-18

Pray for growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus and **read** the passage together...

Looking around

Immediate context

Luke set his narrative of John the Baptist’s preaching ministry within its historical/political and theological context – 3:1-6. This narrative in turn introduces the baptism, lineage and ministry of Jesus – 3:21 and following.

Its place in the structure of the book

Our passage follows Luke’s birth/infancy narrative and highlights the promised re-emergence of prophecy in Israel, while preparing the reader for the emergence and public ministry of Jesus.

Its contribution to the message and purpose of the book

The book’s message centres on Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world. John’s ministry was to prepare the way for the One who brings God’s salvation that would be seen by, and available to, all people (3:6). Our passage develops the character of God’s universal salvation with John’s reference to Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit (3:16). God’s salvation is ultimately from his coming wrath, and this theme, too, is developed here, in John’s exchanges with the crowds (3:7-9, 17). Moreover, both God’s salvation and judgment are brought by Jesus (3:17).

Our passage also anticipates Jesus’ own uncompromising call of discipleship. Following him always requires initial and ongoing repentance and practical obedience – see 3:8-14.

Luke also emphasises throughout his book the inclusion of the poor and the disreputable in Jesus' calling and salvation. Our passage foreshadows this theme with the reference to tax collectors coming for John's baptism (3:12-13).

Is the passage or part of it quoted elsewhere in the Bible or does it quote other parts of the Bible?

While only Luke includes John's conversations with his followers (3:10-14), the other three Gospels record John's ministry (Matt 3:1-17; Mk 1:1-13; Jn 1:19-36).

How the passage contributes to our understanding of God, Jesus, humanity, God's salvation, life together as Christians, discipleship

God's wrath is his holy indignation and opposition towards evil. Our passage cites God's wrath as coming (3:7). This teaches us that his wrath is certain and controlled. It does not flare up in fury. It is his settled opposition to sin and evil that is patient and will reach its climax at the appointed time (3:7-9).

God's call to repentance from sin is an expression of his mercy and grace. True repentance shows itself in changed lives (3:8-14). The promised Holy Spirit is the One who brings repentance and obedience (3:16).

The Christian gospel is good news (3:18) because it is about God's gift of Jesus and the Holy Spirit for forgiveness and transformation in the place of condemnation.

Looking behind

Relevant historical, political, social, geographical information helpful for understanding the passage

In Jesus' day there was a widespread belief among the Jews that their Abrahamic ancestry alone made them the people of God and would thus save them from God's judgment (3:8; see also John 8:31-47).

Tax collectors were Jews who worked as agents collecting taxes for Rome. They were notorious for overtaxing and pocketing the surplus.

The soldiers may well have been Jewish soldiers who accompanied the tax collectors as back up in their tax collecting from the public.

Looking within

Movements or structure in the passage

- verses 7-14 contain John's dialogue with his listeners concerning true repentance
- verses 15-17 directly deal with the identity, salvation and judgment of the Christ

Important or repeated words, ideas, themes

True repentance, judgment, the Christ, the Holy Spirit

Important contrasting words (but, although, whereas, whilst), explanatory words (therefore, so that, for, because, since, in order that), timing words (next, immediately, after, when)

In verse 16 the 'But' makes a sharp contrast between John and his baptism with water and the much greater One he is preparing the way for and his baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Looking clearly

Using all of the above, work out the passage's main idea and supporting ideas:

Main idea

Supporting ideas

Try to summarise these in a clear, succinct statement:

Try to represent what the passage **says** and **means** with a drawing. No art show entries necessary! Invite *willing* people to explain their drawings, unpacking what is being said and the meaning.

Looking at Jesus

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

How has this study enlarged or enriched your understanding of Jesus and his claims, call and promises?

How do you respond to Him?

Looking in the mirror

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What personal and corporate (your home group or church) beliefs you hold does this study confirm to be true?

What personal and corporate beliefs has this study challenged and corrected?

What personal and corporate values, attitudes and priorities has this study reinforced or challenged?

What personal and corporate behaviour and traditions has this study endorsed or challenged?

Looking forward

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What encouragements, comforts and changes will you or your group take with you today?

Resolve to help one another move forward in repentance and faith.

Prayer and praise