

## Study 2: Preparing for ministry

*May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.*

Please prepare for our meeting by reading **Luke 3:1-4:30** and thinking about the following questions. If you haven't time for everything, just do whatever you can – no one will check up on you. If possible, please bring a Bible with you to the meeting.

### 1. The ministry of John the Baptist

If time allows, please glance at Mark's fairly brief account of John's ministry of baptism (Mk 2-8).

- i) Luke includes an extra phrase in the quotation from Isaiah (Lk 3:4-6). What is it, and why is it important?
- ii) What does Luke's account have to say about (a) who the people of God are, (b) whether repentance can wait, (c) what kinds of behaviour are associated with repentance.
- iii) There is a small factual error in Luke's account: Herodias was previously married not to Philip (who actually married her daughter Salome) but to yet another brother, Herod Boethus, who wasn't ambitious enough to suit her. Do slips like this cast doubt on the reliability of Luke's account of Jesus's life and teaching?
- iv) What was Jesus doing when the Spirit descended on him after his baptism?

### 2. What temptations did Our Lord have to overcome as he dedicated himself to a life of teaching, serving and suffering?

Mark's Gospel just says that "he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan", but Luke and Matthew both have a lot to say about the kinds of temptation which Our Lord faced.

- i) There were no witnesses to Our Lord's temptations. How do you think Luke knew what they were?
- ii) Can you think of any other encounters with Satan in the gospels?
- iii) We are unlikely to be tempted to turn stones into bread or to make a grab for the kingdoms of the world or to throw ourselves off a pinnacle. But are there any temptations in our own lives which have something in common with Our Lord's temptations?

### 3. Genealogies (optional)

We won't focus on Luke's genealogy in this session, because there is so much else to look at. But if you are interested, you could look through Lk. 3:23-38 and see how many Old Testament characters you recognise.

- Why do you think that Luke thought it was worth including a genealogy through Joseph, when he had made clear that Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus?
- Luke takes his genealogy back to Adam, while the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 only goes back to Abraham: can you think why?

#### 4. Proclamation and confrontation in Nazareth

- i) Our Lord applies to himself Isaiah's prophecies about an 'anointed' servant of God. 'Anointed' is the same word as 'Christ' or Messiah. What does this passage teach us about what Our Lord thinks the role of the Christ should be?
- ii) Mark's Gospel (Mk. 6:1-6) places the episode much later in Our Lord's ministry and has less detail. It lacks the stories about Elijah and Elisha and doesn't mention that the synagogue congregation tried to kill him. Can you suggest any reasons why Luke moved and expanded Mark's account?

[*Note:* In most translations Our Lord's behaviour seems surprisingly confrontational – he seems to say that no prophet is acceptable in his home town even though at that point the congregation are speaking well of him and admiring him. But verse 22 might be better translated as: "And they were all bringing up what they knew about him, and were taken aback by the grace of his words, and were saying 'Is not this the son of Joseph?'. That is, as soon as they recognised him and started telling each other what they remembered about his background, they simply pigeonholed him as Joseph's son, and his gracious teaching struck them only as outrageous swank.]