

John Clears The Path- Pt. 1

Luke 3:1-6

Intro: In this passage, Luke does a masterful job in setting the scene for John's arrival, giving us the entire layout with the key players in place.

In verses (1-3) Luke gives us: a) The Historical Setting b) Geographical Setting c) Spiritual Setting d) Finally, the Prophetic Setting (v. 4-6)

I. **Setting The Scene:** To get the full impact of the drama involved, here, we need to see the dark backdrop in order to get the full effect of the Light that arrives on the scene... (Read 1-3)

A) **Israel was in the throes of _____ times.** When John burst on the scene, Israel was not enjoying any kind of Abrahamic or Davidic Covenant blessings, nor any realization of the New Covenant of Jeremiah & Ezekiel- where God would establish a law written on their hearts, where they would be cleansed from sin, establishing a new and intimate relationship with Him.

B) **Instead, they were living under complete _____ by a foreign country,** as well as harsh oppression both politically and spiritually, and they had been in this oppressed and limbo-like state for hundreds of years.

C) **They knew all-too-well about a promised Messiah who would _____ Israel,** but after 400 years of silence, they were exhausted, tensions were high and they were MORE than ready for relief from a Savior. "Where are you Messiah???" Now'd be a good time!!"

II. Politically-

a. **They no longer had a _____,** but instead smaller, almost petty kings called Tetrarchs who were put in place by Rome to rule the _____ parts of the kingdom that had been split up. To add insult to injury, these Tetrarchs weren't even from Israel; i.e. not Jewish, but Roman.

b. **Kingdom split into 4 parts:**

- i. One ruled by *Pontius Pilot*
- ii. One ruled by *Herod Antipas* (Son of Herod the Great)
- iii. One ruled by *Philip*
- iv. One ruled by *Lysanius*

c. **All of the country was ruled by Tiberius Caesar at the time,** who had unilateral rule of the entire region.

III. Spiritually-

a. While there were still God-fearing Jews in Israel, **the religious system & leadership was seriously _____.**

b. **The High Priests, Annas & Caiaphas were both _____.**

- i. **NOTE:** Although occupied by Rome, the highest position or authority, among the Jewish people, would be the High Priest.
- ii. **Normally there would only be _____ High Priest** and they would have to come out of the Levitical line, appointed by God. However, during this occupation, the Levitical lineage was thrown out and Rome appointed whomever they wanted- usually whomever won their _____ politically or bribed their way in with money. In this case there were actually 2, one official and one unofficial, again, appointed by Rome.

iii. **Caiaphas was the official High-Priest, but Annas, his father-in-law,** who had served for 10 years and then removed by Rome, actually still held a death grip on the High Priesthood, and **was the _____ power behind the office,** which is why Jesus was "first" brought to Annas after being arrested (Jn. 18). He remained a major controller of Israel through his 5 sons (all eventually serving the HP office) as well as son-in-law Caiaphas.

iv. **PROBLEM: The Temple in that day, had sadly become a very lucrative and dishonest business,** and the office of the High Priest had drastically changed from being a Spiritual Representation to that of a corrupt _____-laundering syndicate controlled by Annas's family and their friends. **POINT:** Thus, the main reason that Annas & Caiaphas had Jesus killed, was _____ for his theology, but because he was ruining their cash cow, their livelihood. Jesus had cleansed the temple twice and driven out the money changers so He simply had to go! (*vid*)

c. **The Priesthood itself was divided up into fragments, poorly represented by two main leadership groups:**

- i. **Pharisees-** tended to be legalistic and hypocritical, _____ leading people to the Lord but more to their religious system
- ii. **Sadducees-** who did not believe in the _____ of God, nor the Power of God, thus they were considered quite liberal and anti-supernatural. (**Ph- Matt. 23:23-24; Sad- Matt. 22:29**)

d. **Idolatry was everywhere-** Caesar believed himself to be a _____, with idols of him placed everywhere, which was very difficult for the Jews to live with since they detested the sin of idolatry, which they learned from their captivity in Babylon centuries earlier. (**Lev. 26:1**)