

**THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK**

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea, Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas... the Word of God came to John the Baptist in the desert.”

(Luke 3: 1-2)

People tell us things all the time. They relay stories and share vignettes that they find fascinating or troublesome or irritating or inspiring. Often we respond by asking, “When was that?” Finding out when something happened helps us, it makes a difference and serves to complete our understanding of what has been shared. What time? What day? What other circumstances? Asking the “When?” question helps us to grasp the reality of what is being shared.

The first few sentences of the Gospel of Saint Luke anticipate such a question on the part of the ones who will be reading or listening to the gospel he is presenting. And so Luke is at pains to situate the events of John the Baptist’s ministry and life, and Jesus’ ministry and life, in the very real worlds of the Roman Empire and the people of Israel. Luke names the players. People can come to know the dates when they ruled or governed or led.

Luke tries to anticipate our question and by situating the events of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth in the very real world of Rome and Israel, Luke is hoping that people will be led to take seriously what he is about to relate. Why? Because his account is full of wondrous deeds—healings, exorcists, raising from the dead, calming of storms, feeding a multitude with just a few loaves of bread. Luke will present Jesus as the very Holy One of God incarnate in our flesh. He will describe a most ignominious death and the most surprising of all events—bodily resurrection on the third day. Wait! What?! Resurrection? When was that? Do you see what I mean? And that is the question of the week.