

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

+ THE BOOK OF LUKE

WHAT WE MOST ASSUREDLY BELIEVE

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, ASSOCIATED

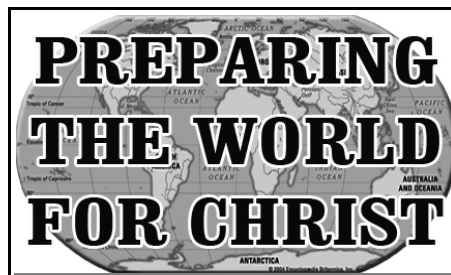
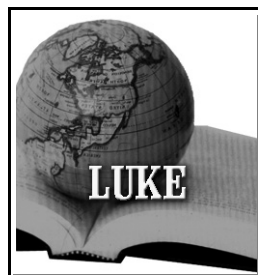
An overview of the Gospel of Luke, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson #10

COMMENTARY ON: 3:1-20

JOHN THE BAPTIST

At this point in history, the greatest prophet until that time arose: John the Baptist. Jesus Himself said that a great prophet had not arisen prior to that. He came preparing the way for the Christ, who would take away the sins of the world. Ready people for Christ, he preached a message of repentance, even telling certain groups of people what they should do. Some people sensed it was an epochal time, for there was a spirit of expectation among the people. "All men" even "mused," or contemplated, whether John was the Christ. John, however, told of One coming after him, who was greater than himself. John personally baptized Jesus, whom he willingly acknowledged was greater than himself. In preaching repentance, John even reproved Herod because he had married his brother's Philip's wife, and for "all the evils which he had done." As of he had not sinned enough already, the Spirit says that Herod "Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison." (Luke

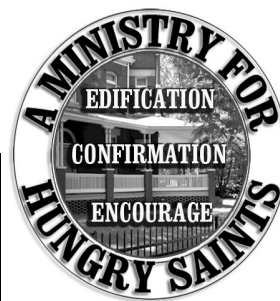


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Luke, 1/23/2015

Lesson Number 10



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), EMTV=English Majority Text (2002); ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ETRV=Easy to Read (1999), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), JUB=Jubilee Bible (2003); KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literat Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

PERSUADED OF THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE CERTAINTY OF THE THINGS WE BELIEVE, LUKE MAKES US MORE FIRM BY BUTTRESSING OUR FAITH, AND CONFIRMING WE HAVE NOT EMBRACED FABLES.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

..Luke 3:1 "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, ² Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. ⁷ Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ⁹ And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ¹⁰ And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? ¹¹ He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. ¹² Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? ¹³ And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. ¹⁴ And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. ¹⁵ And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; ¹⁶ John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: ¹⁷ Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. ¹⁸ And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, ²⁰ Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. Luke 3:1-20

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

At this point in Divinely orchestrated history, the greatest

prophet until that time arose: John the Baptist. He entered the scene of religious activity without a lot of

fanfare. He was not announced by another prophet, and did not rise slowly, over a lengthy period of time.

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There had been some great

prophets prior to John the Baptist: Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Naham, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. **But none of them were greater than John.** That is, none of them delivered a greater message, occupied a more significant period in history, or had a greater work to do, than John. The total purpose of John was to prepare the way for the Christ of God – **to provide an environment in which the promised Messiah could launch His ministry.**

Jesus Himself said that a greater prophet had not arisen prior to that: *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist"* (Matt 11:11). This was not owing to some personal accomplishments of John, but because of the message he had, and the period of time he occupied.

John came preparing the way for the Christ, who would take away the sins of the world. He was readying people for Christ, and therefore he preached a message of repentance,

even telling certain of groups of people what they should do.

Some people sensed it was an epochal time, for there was a spirit of expectation among the people. *"All men"* even *"mused,"* or contemplated, whether John was the Christ or not. However, John told of One coming after him, who was greater than himself. He personally baptized Jesus, whom he willingly and publically acknowledged was greater than himself. In preaching repentance, John even reprovved Herod because he had married his brother's Philips's wife, also rebuking him for *"all the evils which he had done."* As if Herod had not sinned enough already, the Spirit says that *He "Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison"* (Luke 3:20).

Luke then provides us with an inspired genealogy of Christ, tracing the Savior back to Adam, who was *"the son of God"* (Luke 3:38). That genealogy is comprised of progenitors that were selected by God Himself, with each one of them being noted for a single offspring through which the genealogy would continue until Christ, at which time it would terminate.

IN THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF TIBERIUS CAESAR

¹Luke 3:1 *"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, ^{2a} Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests . . ."*

Notice the precision in identifying the time.

- ⇒ The reign of Tiberius Caesar
- ⇒ Pontius Pilate the Governor of Judaea.
- ⇒ Herod the tetrarch of Galilee.
- ⇒ Philip the tetrarch of Ituraea and the

region of Trachonitus.

- ⇒ Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene.
- ⇒ Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.

The Roman Empire was the fourth



kingdom depicted by the image Nebuchadnezzar had revealed to him by God in a dream. **The four Kingdoms were global empires that ruled the world.** In order of their priority and placement in time, they were Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire. God gave the interpretation of the dream to Daniel, showing that each kingdom would be weaker than the one preceding it. It was then revealed that during the time of these consecutive kingdoms, the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan 2:44).

The time our text was during the final kingdom, Rome, and the kingdom God was setting up was *"the kingdom*

of God,” announced by John the Baptist and Jesus (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mk 1:15; Lk 21:31). This period was a juncture in human history in which the kingdoms of the world would begin to unravel, and the Law would be brought to an end as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4). The ministry of the Law and the Prophets, according to Jesus, were “until John” (Matt 11:13; Lk 16:16). Now comes an interim period of time in which the ground will be cleared, so to speak, for the establishment of the premier focused work of God – the establishment of His Kingdom. This Kingdom involved the working out of an eternal purpose among men – one in which the work of the devil would be overturned, and men would be adequately prepared to face God Almighty on the day of judgment. The entire Godhead would be involved in the work, together with the holy angels. Some of the things that would be accomplished in the establishment of this Kingdom were as follows.

- ⇒ A satisfactory atonement for sin would be made (Rom 5:11).
- ⇒ The sin of the world would be taken away (John 1:29).
- ⇒ Satan would be destroyed (Heb 2:14).
- ⇒ Principalities and powers would be plundered (Col 2:15).
- ⇒ The Law would be ended as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4).
- ⇒ The way would be cleared for men to be born again (1 Pet 1:23).
- ⇒ An effective means would be established through which men would be “made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

- ⇒ A new and living way to God would be established (Heb 10:22).
- ⇒ A means would be established allowing men to be joined to the Lord, becoming one spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17) – made new creatures (2 Cor 5:17).
- ⇒ Men would be changed from one increasing stage of glory to another, by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).
- ⇒ Men would be thoroughly prepared to reign with Christ (2 Tim 2:12).

All of this would be founded upon the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus Christ. These accomplishments would fall under these three realities: The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Following the completion of His work on earth, Jesus would return to heaven to administer the Kingdom, bringing the work to a God-honoring conclusion, accomplished under the administration of the exalted Christ.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Even though the land of Canaan had been promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen 15:18; Deut 3:18), and

In the Roman structure of government, a tetrach was “**THE GOVERNOR OF THE FOURTH PART OF A PROVINCE.**” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

This rule by Israel’s enemies was the fulfillment of God’s word to them before they took the land of Canaan: “*And if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set My face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: **they that hate you shall reign over you;** and ye shall flee when none pursueth you” (Lev 26:15-17).*

In addition to these political disadvantages, under the leadership of the high priests, Pharisees, Saducees, and scribes, the ways of God had become corrupted, the Word of God was being transgressed by their tradition (Matt 15:3), the people of God were sitting in darkness (Matt 4:16), the commandment of God had been made of

Needless to say, the environment was such that only God could begin a valid work – and begin it He would.

although they were in the land, they were not in charge of the land. At the time of our text, it was being ruled by Roman officials: Pilate over Judaea, Herod over Galilee, and Philip over Ituraea, which was A DISTRICT IN THE NORTH-EAST OF PALESTINE, FORMING, ALONG WITH THE ADJACENT TERRITORY OF TRACHONITIS, THE TETRARCHY OF PHILIP.” EASTON BIBLE DICTIONARY.

“none effect by their tradition (Matt 15:6), and they no longer had a king.

Needless to say, the environment was such that only God could begin a valid work – and begin it He would. In fact, it will be brought to a God-glorifying conclusion.

THE WORD OF GOD CAME UNTO JOHN

“^{2b} . . . the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

THE WORD OF GOD CAME UNTO JOHN

“ . . . the word of God came unto

John the son of Zacharias . . . ”

Other versions read, “a message from God came to John,” NLT “the

message of God came to him," ^{IE} "God spoke to Zechariah's son John," ^{CEV} "the word of the Lord was made unto John," ^{DOUAY} "he received a message from God," ^{ERV} "God spoke to John," ^{GW} and "the Word of God [concerning the attainment through Christ of salvation in the kingdom of God] came to John." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The precise word delivered is not made known, but it doubtless pertained to what He was to do and say to the people. This is probably when he was told the following:

- ⇒ **How to identify the Messiah, and how He would baptize:** "And I knew Him not: but **He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost**" (John 1:33).
- ⇒ **When he was told to preach,** "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2).
- ⇒ **The Messiah would be One** "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"(Matt 3:12).
- ⇒ **That Christ was the consummate Bridegroom:** "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

⇒ **That the Messiah came from above, and was above all:** "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all" (John 3:31).

⇒ **God gave not the Spirit by measure to Christ:** "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34).

⇒ **The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand:** "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35).

⇒ **Everlasting life is contingent upon believing "on the Son:"** "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Men have debated over whether the words of John 3:31-36 were the words of John the Baptist, or John the Gospel writer. While the first part of this chapter was clearly the words of Christ to Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), verse twenty-four sets the stage by saying John had not yet been put into prison. Then, a report was given to John stating that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John himself (John 3:26). The remainder of the chapter, to me, clearly presents John's answer to that report. Notwithstanding, this is not something that should become the catalyst for harsh disagreement.

global empires did not exist. Egypt had an extensive empire, but not of the order of the kingdoms revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and interpreted by Daniel. **The kingdoms of Babylonia, the Medes and the Persians, Greece, and Rome dominated the entire world.**

This was necessary for men to obtain a proper understanding of the Kingdom of God. It is not a kingdom that has most of the rule, or that should be over all – it is over all. It is a Kingdom that represents the Creator and Owner of all things. Nothing happens that is not under the control of this Kingdom. **All other kingdoms rise or fall under the dictates of God's everlasting Kingdom, now being administered by the exalted Christ.**

Those who live in a democracy cannot even imagine this kind of Kingdom. Christians living under such an arrangement are fond of thinking of God requiring man's permission or consent to do anything. It is difficult for them to think of God **making** anyone do something – Like Adam and Eve, Cain, the people of Noah's day, those who attempted to build in the plain of Shinar, the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, and the nation of Egypt letting Israel go.

But this is the kind of Kingdom Jesus is presently governing. If men doubt this to be the case, the end of the world and the day of judgment will make it quite clear – although, at that time no one will be able to adapt to the circumstance.

IN THE WILDERNESS

" . . . in the wilderness."

Other versions read, "in the desert," ^{NIV} "in the waste land," ^{BBE} and "who was living in the wilderness." ^{NLT}

The Scriptural word "wilderness" has the following lexical meaning: "SOLITARY, LONELY, DESOLATE, UNINHABITED; A DESERT, WILDERNESS," ^{THAYER} "UNINHABITED REGION, DESOLATE PLACE, DESERT," ^{FRIBERG} "PERTAINING TO AN ABSENCE OF RESIDENTS OR INHABITANTS IN A PLACE – UNINHABITED, DESERTED." ^{LOUW-NIDA}

This was necessary for men to obtain a proper understanding of the Kingdom of God. It is not a kingdom that has most of the rule, or that should be over all – it is over all.

- ⇒ **That Christ would "increase," growing in both glory and power:** "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

THE REASON FOR THE FOUR GLOBAL EMPIRES

Until Babylon, I understand that

In preparation for his brief but essential ministry, it was necessary that John not be in the midst of needless distractions. He had to be free to hear, receive, digest, and muse upon the things revealed to him. He did not spend this time in the Temple, synagogue, or marketplace. He had to begin his ministry in a running posture, so to speak. There was no provision for an introduction to him. **The Lord Himself would draw the people to hear him, and see to it that his ministry is known.**

There is a kind of good “wilderness” where less of the world is found, distractions are fewer, and illicit desires are reduced. This is one of the many advantages of a godly assembly – people gathered together for a solitary purpose, the “one thing” that is “needful” (Lk 10:42). Of course, when the assembly is invaded by opportunists, juvenile presentation, various forms of entertainment, and unbelievers, the whole purpose for the assembly is neutralized, and it becomes more difficult to hear, receive, digest,

and muse upon the things of God. The edification quotient is then reduced to an unacceptable level, and the purpose thus becomes recruitment instead of edification (1 Cor 14:25; Eph 4:11-16). The institution itself is promoted, and to the degree that it is, Christ Jesus remains hidden.

A technical observation. The Word was not in the desert, with John going there to get it. John was in the desert, and the Word of the Lord came to him while he was there.

HE CAME INTO ALL OF THE COUNTRY ABOUT JORDAN

“³ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

HE CAME INTO ALL THE COUNTRY
“And he came into all the country about Jordan . . .”

Matthew identifies this as “the wilderness of Judaea” (Matt 3:1). Mark says “John baptized in the wilderness” (Mk 1:4). The apostle John points out that John baptized “in Bethabara beyond Jordan” [south] (John 1:28)– where Jesus was baptized –, and “in Aenon near unto Salim” [north] (John 3:23), during the ministry of Jesus. It is estimated that the area in which John ministered was approximately one hundred miles in length.

MUST BE LISTENED TO AND OBEYED; SPECIFICALLY USED OF THE PUBLIC PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AND MATTERS PERTAINING TO IT,” THAYER “ANNOUNCE, PUBLICLY PROCLAIM; MAKE KNOWN EXTENSIVELY, TELL EVERYWHERE; IN A RELIGIOUS SENSE, DENOTING PROCLAMATION OF A SACRED MESSAGE PROCLAIM, PREACH, PUBLISH; AS PROCLAIMING THE NECESSITY OF A COURSE OF ACTION PREACH,” FRIBERG “TO ANNOUNCE IN A FORMAL OR OFFICIAL MANNER BY MEANS OF A HERALD OR ONE WHO FUNCTIONS AS A HERALD - ‘TO ANNOUNCE, TO PROCLAIM,’ LOUW-NIDA AND “PROCLAIM ALOUD, ANNOUNCE, MENTION PUBLICLY.” GINGRICH

In English, coming from the Latin word “praedicare,” it means “TO PROCLAIM, MAKE KNOWN.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

PREACHING
“... preaching
...”

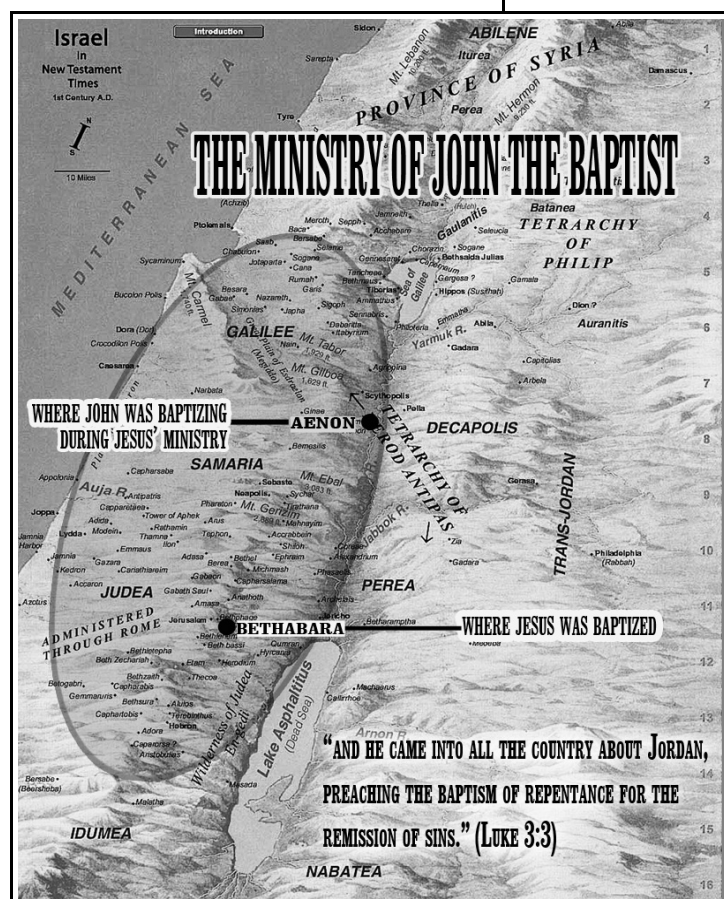
Other versions read, “proclaiming,” NIV “calling,” CEB “told people,” GWN/ERV and “telling.” CEV

Lexically, and as used here, the word “preaching,” means “TO BE A HERALD; TO OFFICIATE AS HERALD; TO PROCLAIM AFTER THE MANNER OF A HERALD; ALWAYS WITH A SUGGESTION OF FORMALITY, GRAVITY, AND AN AUTHORITY WHICH

Preaching is fundamentally an announcement, or the proclamation of an existing reality – in this case, an ordinance Divinely originated. “Preaching” is not delivering a private opinion, or the introduction of a human conclusion.

In Scripture, we are first introduced to the word “preaching” in the book of Jonah. It’s use differs slightly, in that it applies to the message itself rather than to the activity of proclaiming. “Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee” (Jonah 3:2). Other versions read, “the message,” NKJV “the proclamation,” NASB and “the word.” BBE

This is the manner in which



“preaching” is consistently presented in Scripture. Concerning content, it is a message. Concerning activity, it is the proclamation of a revealed Word, or message. **Preaching is not a human diagnosis. It is not the conveyance of an opinion or a private interpretation.**

In Christ, *“preaching”* is associated with *“the power of God”* (1 Cor 1:18). *“Preaching,”* although men consider it foolishness, is **the means** whereby men are saved (1 Cor 1:21). God has also *“manifested His Word through preaching”* (Tit 1:3).

Perhaps you have noticed that in our time there is a glaring absence of the proclamation of a fundamental message from God. There appears to be a preoccupation with solving the problems of men. Anyone who is willing to major on such things is more apt to rise of the top of the religious environment. However, such an approach does not require a basic message – unless it is that you can have more. I have sadly observed that many professing preachers and teachers really have little or nothing to say. Their word does not get beyond, “You can have more “You can do better,” or “Your problems can be solved.”

That is not the kind of message John brought, nor Jesus after him, nor the apostles whom Jesus sent forth. **They consistently drew the attention of men to their association with the Living God.** That was the matter that had to be addressed.

THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SIN

REPENTANCE

BAPTISM

REMISSION

“ . . . the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

Other versions read, *“the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{NASB} *“baptism of repentance unto remission of sins,”* ^{ASV} *“baptism as a*

sign of forgiveness of sin for those whose hearts were changed,” ^{BEB} *“baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins,”* ^{CEB} *“proclaiming an immersion involving turning to God from sin in order to be forgiven,”* ^{CJB} *“be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven,”* ^{NLT} *“a baptism of reformation -- to remission of sins,”* ^{YLT} *“baptized to show that they had turned to God and away from their sins, in order to be forgiven,”* ^{LIVING} *“Change your hearts and be immersed for the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{IE} *“baptism of the penitent for the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“a baptism conditioned on repentance to obtain the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“an immersion of repentance for a release of sins,”* ^{ABP} *“Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven,”* ^{CEV} *“Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins,”* ^{GNB} *“preaching repentance and baptism in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{GOODSPEED} *“proclaiming a baptism about repentance for the forgiveness of sins,”* ^{ISV} *“preaching a baptism of life-change leading to forgiveness of sins,”* ^{MESSAGE} and *“preaching a baptism of repentance of hearty amending of their ways, with abhorrence of past wrongdoing) unto the forgiveness of sin.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

⇒ **Matthew’s Gospel** reads, *“And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins”* (Matt 3:6), and *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. . .”* (Matt 3:11).

⇒ **Mark’s Gospel** reads, *“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river*

of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4-5).

⇒ **Paul said of John’s baptism,** *“John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”* (Acts 19:4).

THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE

It is not fashionable in today’s society to preach repentance – to call upon men to change – alter the way they think, and bring forth fruits that confirm they have repented (Matt 3:8; Acts 26:20). However, this is the context in which the real Jesus is presented,

⇒ **John did call upon the people to “repent.”** *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matt 3:1-2).

⇒ Later Jesus also called the people to repentance: *“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt 4:17). *“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”* (Mark 1:14-15).

⇒ When Jesus first sent out the twelve to preach, it is written, *“And they went out, and preached that men should repent”* (Mark 6:12).

⇒ Jesus said He came *“to call sinners to repentance”* (Matt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32).

⇒ After He rose from the dead, Jesus told His disciples, *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47).

⇒ The Apostles called upon men to *“Repent.”* *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every*

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). **"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord"** (Acts 3:19).

⇒ Paul preached that men should repent: *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"* (Acts 17:30). *"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"* (Acts 26:19-20).

Repentance is not a drawn out process. Experientially, it is a resolute decision accompanied by the cessation of sinful expressions. **From a higher vantage point, repentance is something given by Christ and God** (Acts 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25). The implication is that if a person actually makes up their mind to repent, God will give them the ability to do so. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts one of the guilt of sin (John 16:7-11). Jesus said He would do this in the role of *"the Comforter"* (John 16:7-8).

In our time calls to repentance are not common. Men have invented programs to help people through their moral and spiritual difficulties, assuring them that if they work hard

It was the guarantee of the coming sacrifice that enabled God to be merciful toward sinners prior to that sacrifice. John baptized men in anticipation of the coming Christ whom He Himself announced would take away the sin of the world

enough, following the rules of the program, eventually they will acquire new habits. The difficulty with all of that is that Jesus is not associated with such processes – regardless of the claims that they make. To those to whom He has shown mercy Jesus says, *"Sin no more!"* (John 5:14; 8:11). Those who take His word seriously will do that just as surely as an impotent man took up his bed and walked (John 5:8-9), or a man with withered hand stretched it out (Matt 12:13). The word of Jesus is still *"with power"* (Lk 4:32).

THE REMISSION OF SIN

The remission of sin preached by John was in anticipation of Jesus taking away the sin of the world, which He said Jesus would do (John 1:29). Paul referred to this kind of thing when he wrote, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God"* (Rom 3:24-25). Other versions read, *"whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,"* NKJV *"God presented Him as a sacrifice*

of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished," NIV and *"his was to show God's righteousness, because in His Divine forbearance He had passed over and ignored former sins without punishment."* AMPLIFIED

In other words, the atoning sacrifice of Christ was so sure that God could react mercifully to those who repented in anticipation of the time Jesus would take away the sin of the world, putting it away (Heb 9:26). There was nothing that could stop the atonement being made by Christ – not the combined efforts of men or Satan's diabolical hosts. **It was the guarantee of the coming sacrifice that enabled God to be merciful toward sinners prior to that sacrifice.** John baptized men in anticipation of the coming Christ whom He Himself announced would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). **His was truly a ministry of faith.** That is precisely why Paul said of John, *"John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus"* (Acts 19:4). Without Christ, there would have been no remission realized in John's baptism.

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

"⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low;

and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

AS IT IS WRITTEN

"As it is written in the book of the

words of Esaias the prophet . . ."

The words of reference are found in Isaiah 40:3-5. They were written within the context of the comfort of God: *"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye*

comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isa 40:1-2).

The words *"it is written"* occur eighty times in Scripture. **They never refer to the writings of uninspired men.** The Lord once said to Israel, *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isa 8:20). Paul reminds us that *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim 3:16-17).

angel told John, *"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"* (Rev 19:10).

All tangential teaching leads away from Jesus, and even obscures Him. That circumstance causes men to error in their thinking. It is only when God Himself is perceived in Christ Jesus, that the Scriptures can be comprehended as God intended. The Scriptures were never intended to be studied like a book of mathematics. They were never intended to be flexible, or adaptable to variant forms of religious thought.

That is precisely why John the Baptist is discerned by means of the Scriptures. If they were not absolutely

2:11).

THE VOICE

*" . . . saying, **The voice** of one crying in the wilderness . . ."*

Matthew says, *"In those days came John the Baptist, **preaching in the wilderness of Judaea**"* (Matt 3:1). He did not come preaching in Jerusalem, the synagogue, or the Temple – **but in the wilderness.** It was not music that attracted the people to John – it was his powerful preaching. He did not offer gifts to the people, but preached to them. Looking at it more closely, this is how God worked through John–through his preaching.

Other Gospel writers tell us that the people flooded out to hear John preaching in the wilderness.

⇒ *"Then **went out to him** Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan"* (Matt 3:5).

⇒ *"And there **went out unto him** all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Mark 1:5).

Later Luke writes of *"the multitude that **came forth to be baptized of him**"* (Lk 3:7). This was a phenomenon rarely seen in the history of the world – the people flocking out to hear a prophet of God – **something they did with Jesus also.** As it is written, *"And **His fame went throughout all Syria:** and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them. And **there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan**"* (Matt 4:24-25).

This confirms that God can, and has, caused people to actually come to those He sends – even if it is in a wilderness or desert, by the sea (Matt 13:2; Mk 3:7; 4:1), or on a mountain (Matt 15:29-31). Sometimes, when He

If the sophists and theological surfers are correct in saying there are mistakes in the Scriptures, and various additions and subtractions, how can they be the touchstone of truth?

If the sophists and theological surfers are correct in saying there are mistakes in the Scriptures, and various additions and subtractions, **how can they be the touchstone of truth?** Even when Jesus walked among men, there were human traditions that had been merged with Scripture in the thinking of the people. But Jesus did not say the Word of God had been corrupted. Rather, it had been neutralized in its effects because of human tradition (Matt 15:6; Mk 7:13).

There is a Divine purpose declared and reflected in Scripture that cannot be distorted. It is *"the hidden wisdom"* affirmed by Paul in First Corinthians 2:7. Isaiah referred to this as *"hidden things"* (Isa 48:8). Jesus referred to them as *"things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world"* (1 Cor 2:7).

Jesus also said that the Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39). A holy

precise, this could not be done.

This is important to note. **Here was a man that was defined by Scripture.** He fulfilled a specific word that was delivered by God, through the Spirit, through a prophet, to men.

⇒ This same procedure is involved in identifying the real Jesus. He is the One of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote (Lk 24:27; John 1:45; Acts 10:43).

⇒ This is also the means by which the real people of God are identified – what the Scriptures declare them to be (Jer 31:31-34; John 13:35; 1 John 2:29; 3:7).

The Lord has no people that contradict what He has said they will be. None of them are unchanged (2 Cor 3:18). None of them are dominated by the power of darkness (Col 1:13). None of them are at home in this world (1 Pet

left a city, “*great multitude followed Him*” (Matt 20:29). Another time, when they heard what Jesus had done, “*a great multitude . . . came unto Him*” (Mk 3:8). Still, another time when Jesus went down into a plain, “*a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases*” (Luke 6:17).

The rarity of such a thing in our time, so far as I am concerned, testifies to the general lack of a perception of the Lord’s presence.

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD

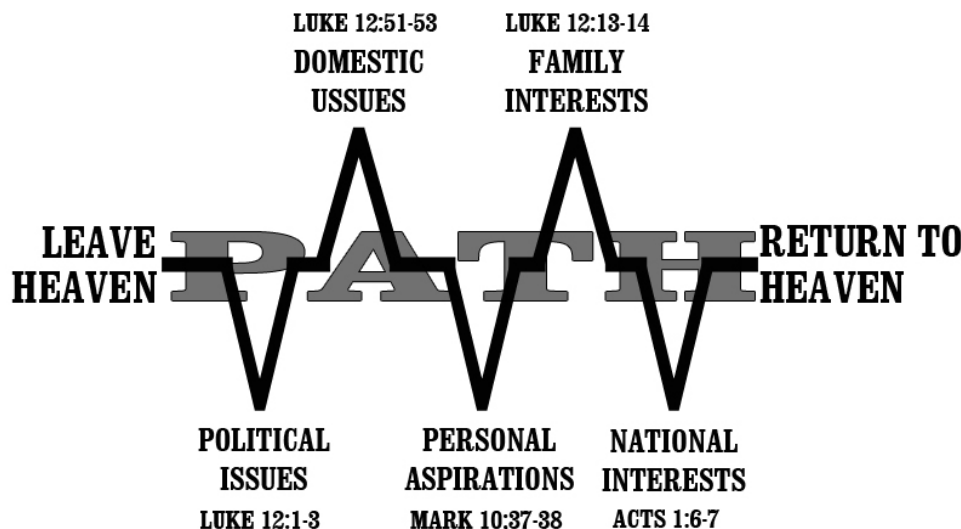
“ . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord . . . ”

Other versions read, “*make ready,*” NASB “*Prepare a road,*” LIVING “*Prepare the Lord’s road,*” IE “*Get the road ready,*” WILLIAMS “*Get the Lord’s way ready,*” GOODSPEED “*Prepare God’s arrival.*” MESSAGE

The words “*prepare ye*” are translated from a single word [hetoimazo], which means, “*TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS, GET EVERYTHING READY,*” THAYER “*MAKE READY, PREPARE,*” FRIBERG “*TO MAKE OR GET READY, PREPARE, PROVIDE,*” LOUW-NIDA AND “*PUT OR KEEP IN READINESS, PREPARE.*” GINGRICH

To confirm the fact that preparing to confront the Lord is a requirement, we have only to consider Israel. When the time came for Israel to confront God for the establishment of the Old Covenant, Moses told the people to prepare for that confrontation. Here are his instructions, given to him by God. “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes. And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet*

MAKE THE PATH STRAIGHT



UNJUSTIFIED DIVERSIONS

soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.” (Ex 19:11-15).

Note the preparations – the sobriety and necessity of them.

- ⇒ Wash their clothes.
- ⇒ Be ready for the third day.
- ⇒ Put a fence around the mountain.
- ⇒ Do not go up into the mountain.
- ⇒ Do not touch the mountain.
- ⇒ Those touching the mount were to be slain.
- ⇒ At the long sounding of the trumpet, the people were to come up to the mountain.
- ⇒ The men were not to come near to their wives.

There could be no competing activities, and even normal activities were to be suspended. They could not even appear in unwashed clothing. In this, Israel was getting ready to confront God.

John’s Ministry

Now, John’s ministry was to get the people ready to receive Christ. That readiness consisted of remorse over their sin, and consequent repentance. The actuality of their repentance was confirmed by the cessation of sinful practices.

Jesus would not adapt to their condition, the people would have to adapt to Him. His adaptation consisted of humbling Himself, taking the form of a Servant, laying down His life, and taking it up again. He would make no further adaptation. Now the people had to rid themselves of appearances that God had established over the centuries would not be tolerated by Himself.

Exactly how does this blend with the “seeker-friendly” mentality? Does the church adapting to the people blend well with what God has required of

men? John preached that men prepared to confront Christ by repenting. Any person who avoids repentance, continuing in an unacceptable manner of life cannot possibly be a “seeker.”

MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT

“ . . . make His paths straight. . . ”

Other versions read, “make straight paths for Him,” ^{NIV} “make His roads straight,” ^{BEB} “make straight paths in the plain for our God,” ^{MRD} “make straight paths for Him,” ^{NIB} “Clear the road for Him!” ^{NLT} “Widen the pathway before Him,” ^{LIVING} and “make His beaten paths straight.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

The “paths” of reference refer to

came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim 1:15)

⇒ *“And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”* (1 John 3:5)

⇒ *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* (1 John 3:8).

⇒ *“God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”* (1 John 4:9)

Making His paths straight is not allowing anything to upstage the

ACTIVITIES

At this point, I must deal with a very sensitive issue. There is an enormous amount of “Christian” activities that are really diversions. As important as philanthropic work, community service, feeding the poor, etc., may appear, they, like all things having to do with men, are secondary. As long as they occupy that secondary place, no one can object to them. **But when they upstage the cause for which Jesus came into the world, they create a crooked path for the church.**

There simply are no examples of the early church engaging in such activities. If they ministered to widows, it was to their own (Acts 6:1-6). If they sent assistance to the poor, it was to the “poor saints” (Rom 15:26). These are just the facts in the case, and are not intended to promote the development of a legalistic system – either for or against. **Rather, it is to remind us that if we expect our efforts to be empowered by God, and if we want the blessing of the Lord to be upon them, they must be devoted to what He has revealed He is doing.** That seems too elementary to have to say any more about it.

EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE FILLED

“ . . . Every valley shall be filled...”

Other versions read, “every ravine shall be filled up,” ^{NASB} “every valley shall be filled in,” ^{NIV} “will be lifted up,” ^{BEB} “Fill up the valleys!” ^{LIVING} “Every ravine must be filled up,” ^{WILLIAMS} “Every hollow must be filled up,” ^{GOODSPEED} and “Every ditch will be filled in.” ^{MESSAGE}

There must be no provision for a plummet to a lower level – a place of lesser emphasis. What was being raised up was a “Highway” – the one to which Isaiah referred “*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion*

Rather, it is to remind us that if we expect our efforts to be empowered by God, and if we want the blessing of the Lord to be upon them, they must be devoted to what He has revealed He is doing.

how He progressed through the world, particularly in His ministry. He was sent into the world for a revealed purpose – one that was multi-dimensional.

⇒ *“Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice”* (John 18:37).

⇒ *“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”* (John 6:38)

⇒ *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10)

⇒ *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* (1 John 3:8)

⇒ *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus*

purpose for which He came – not being diverted from the Divine cause that drove His coming. His attention could not be turned to domestic issues, and family interests, or political issues, or personal aspirations, or national interests. **However important such matters may have appeared, they were not why Jesus came into the world, and the way He took could be cluttered with these kinds of things.**

John the Baptist made the way straight, concentrating on the right thing. He made people aware of sin, which Jesus came to take away. He required repentance, which prepared people to receive a Savior.

At the time Jesus began His ministry, those who had been properly prepared for Him were not thinking of political insurrection like Barabbas. They had not gathered up their family problems and social issues to present them to Jesus. They were ready to hear about living unto God.

DISTRACTING RELIGIOUS

with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa 35:8-10).

You surely have learned by this time that gloom, discouragement, faintheartedness, confusion, and other such things are always low places. Such experiences do not take place in the "heavenly places" where we have been set by the Sovereign God of heaven.

John the Baptist set a high mark for the people. He did not deal with issues having to do with this world. He raised up the valleys so people could think on a higher level. Consider a few of the things he said.

- ⇒ *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 3:2).
- ⇒ *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* (Mat 3:11-12)
- ⇒ *"And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."* (Mark 1:7).
- ⇒ *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29)
- ⇒ *"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."* (John 3:29-30)

You see how that in his preaching, John occupied high places, avoiding the pitfalls of a carnal emphasis.

No effort was made to weave the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees with the message John had been given to deliver. He preached just as though their traditions did not even exist.

EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL SHALL BE BROUGHT LOW

" . . . and every mountain and hill shall be brought low . . . "

These are impeding mountains and hills that make life more difficult than it is intended to be. Some of them in place during the time of John's ministry included the *"tradition of the elders"* (Matt 15:2), *"the tradition of men"* (Mk 7:8), the *"heavy burdens"* of the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt 23:2-4), and the boast of being *"Abraham's seed"* (John 8:33).

These, and other such things, stood as barriers to spiritual progress, and the preparation to receive the Lord's Christ.

John came with a message that exposed the existing darkness, and cast down inhibiting mountains of thoughts. To religious dignitaries he shouted, *"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* (Matt 3:7). To those who trusted in their fleshly heritage he cried, *"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"* (Matt 3:9). What was he doing? **He was bringing every mountain and hill low.**

THE CROOKED PLACES SHALL BE MADE STRAIGHT AND THE ROUGH WAYS SMOOTH

" . . . and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways shall be made smooth . . . "

The religion of the Jews had become a network of distracting thoughts and perceptions. They had been taught by their leaders to get

caught up in bypaths of traditional thought that had made the commandment of God of *"none effect"* (Matt 15:6). The blind were leading the blind, and both of them were falling into the ditch (Matt 15:14).

Jesus said of these blind leaders, *"Let them alone!"* (Matt 15:14) – not to be consumed with either following or speaking to them. **John did not come to correct scribes and Pharisees, nor did Jesus after him.** That itself is an arresting consideration.

The crooked ways were made straight, and the rough places were made smooth by delivering a message that was free or distraction and corruption. No effort was made to weave the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees with the message John had been given to deliver. He preached just as though their traditions did not even exist.

ALL FLESH SHALL SEE

" . . . And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Other versions read, *"And all mankind will see God's salvation,"* ^{NIV} *"all humanity will see God's deliverance,"* ^{CJB} *"everyone will see the salvation of God,"* ^{CSB} *"All people will see the salvation that God gives"* ^{GWN} *"all people will see the salvation sent from God"* ^{NLT} *"all flesh shall see the savior sent of God,"* ^{TNT} *"all mankind shall see the Savior sent from God,"* ^{LIVING} *"all mankind shall see the Savior sent from God,"* ^{ISV} *"everyone will see the saving power of God,"* ^{CEV} *"everyone will see how God will save his people!"* ^{ERV} *"all mankind is to see how God can save!"* ^{GOODSPEED} *"all flesh shall see the saving health of God,"* ^{JUB} and *"And all mankind shall see (behold and understand and at last acknowledge)*

the salvation of God (the deliverance from eternal death decreed by God)."
AMPLIFIED

Up to this time, the salvation of God was not seen by everyone. Only Noah saw it in his time. Only Lot and his daughters saw it at the time of Sodom's destruction. For many years it was only seen by those who personally observed Israel's deliverance and triumph. However, under the administration of Jesus, God has determined that *"all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

Isaiah's prophecy, which is being

following the ministry of John the Baptist. The entire region eventually saw Jesus as He went about doing good and healing that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38). To this day, through the Gospel, men are continuing to see *"the glory of the Lord"* in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). However, God has determined that all flesh shall see this magnificent glory *"together."* All mankind, as one composite whole, with no one missing, and no one failing to behold, shall see the glory of the Lord together. **This will take place when Jesus returns in all of His glory** (Matt 25:31). It is then, following the resurrection of all of the

doubt what they see. No one will fight against what they see. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, *"to the glory of God"* (Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10). For those who are in Christ Jesus, their bowing and their confession will be the prelude the fulness of salvation. For everyone else, it will be the prelude to damnation. **This will happen, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it – and it is not possible for God to say something that is not absolutely true in every detail.**

One of the jeopardies of our time is that a message is being delivered to the people that numbs their spiritual senses, and causes them to live as though this manifestation of Divine glory is not going to take place. **A lethargic spirit has enveloped in the professing church that is startling.** Men have become so used to it that they think nothing of it. Because of it, God has poured out the spirit of deep sleep upon the professing church, making it impossible for them to see this glory. Just as He said He would do, He has sent them *"strong delusion"* so they will ultimately be damned because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved (2 Thess 2:10-12). **It is essential that Christ's glory be perceived now** (2 Cor 3:18)!

One of the jeopardies of our time is that a message is being delivered to the people that numbs their spiritual senses, and causes them to live as though this manifestation of Divine glory is not going to take place.

quoted, reads, *"And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it"* (Isa 40:5).

This revelation began immediately

dead, that *"every eye shall see Him"* (Rev 1:7). All will see Him as He really is right now: *"the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (1 Tim 6:15). **No one will**

WHO HATH WARNED YOU

"⁷ Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

THE MULTITUDE THAT CAME TO BE BAPTIZED

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him. . ."

Other versions read, *"the*

multitudes," ^{NKJV} and *"crowds."* ^{NIV}

John was instantly popular. It was the sort of popularity that could not be manufactured by men. Further, not all men could handle this kind of fame, as when a *"multitude"* came out to be baptized by John. A casual speaker might leap for joy when such a thing took place. **What will John the Baptist do?**

THE GENERATION OF VIPERS

" . . . O generation of vipers . . ."

Other versions read, *"brood of vipers,"* ^{NKJV} *"Ye offspring of vipers,"* ^{ASV} *"offspring of snakes,"* ^{BBE} *"children of*

snakes!" ^{CEB} *"You snakes!"* ^{CJB} *"poisonous snakes!"* ^{GWN} *"progeny of vipers,"* ^{MRD} *"generation of vipers,"* ^{TNT} *"You bunch of snakes!"* ^{CEV} and *"You are all snakes!"* ^{ERV}

A viper was more than a mere snake, it was a **"POISONOUS SERPENT, SNAKE,"** ^{FRIBERG} **"SPECIES OF POISONOUS SNAKES."** ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Matthew says this crowd was *"many of the Pharisees and Sadducees"* (Matt 3:7). It was not the group that flocked out to John *"confessing their sins"* (Matt 3:6; Mk 1:5). This is probably the reason John spoke so harshly to them – they had not provided

enough evidence to justify them being baptized for the remission of sins.

Of course, this is not the manner of either a religious institution or a hireling. Such are glad to count people as converts who give no evidence of being repentant, loving the truth, or eager to please the Lord.

WHO WARNED YOU?

" . . . who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? . . . "

Other versions read, *"flee from the coming wrath,"* ^{NIV} *"at whose word are you going in flight from the wrath to come?"* ^{BBE} *"Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon?"* ^{CEB} *"Who warned you to escape the coming punishment?"* ^{CJB} *"Who showed you how to flee from God's coming anger?"* ^{GWN} *"who warned you to flee from the coming retribution?"* ^{NJB} *"You are trying to escape hell without truly turning to God! That is why you want to be baptized,"* ^{LIVING} *"Who told*

God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled FOR REFUGE to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb 6:18). For those who do not flee to Jesus, wrath looms imminent!

Whether by special inspiration, or because of spiritual sensitivity gained by being filled with the Spirit, John knew these men were not coming to obtain the remission of sins. Whatever their motive was, it was not acceptable. It is my persuasion that if words like this had been wisely and appropriately used in recent years, the professed church would not be laden with sinners.

BRING FORTH FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE

" . . . Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance . . . "

Other versions read, *"fruits in keeping with repentance,"* ^{NASB} *"that befit repentance,"* ^{RSV} *"Make clear by your acts that your hearts have been*

does not continue to live as he did before. Lest anyone be tempted to think this was a requirement for John's baptism alone, several decades after Jesus had been enthroned in heaven, Paul said he preached the same thing: *"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"* (Acts 26:19-20).

There are people within the professed Christian community who deny this requirement can be met. They admit they have external "habits" they cannot break. Admittedly, no one can change their basic constitution. They do have to be born again (John 3:7). However, they can alter their observable conduct, proving they have repented. This state cannot be maintained throughout the entirety of life without experiencing the washing of regeneration (Tit 3:5). However, initially it does confirm their repentance is genuine. It must be clear that newness of life cannot be poured into the old wineskins of the natural man.

GOD IS ABLE

" . . . and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. "

Having Abraham as one's father in the flesh is an advantage, but not the **ultimate** advantage. John here affirms that God can make children to Abraham, in an external way, out of stones. However, that would bring Him no glory, nor would it give a moral and spiritual advantage to the stones. Something has to be done with man's nature.

you to run away from punishment which is coming?," ^{IE} *and "Who secretly warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"* ^{AMPLIFIED}

John's word gives us an idea of what is involved in repentance. It is more than being sorrowful for sin. It is an aggressive effort to get away from the appointed wrath to come. This is also one of the primary reasons for coming to Jesus. As it is written, *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for*

changed," ^{BBE} *"Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts,"* ^{CEB} *"If you have really turned from your sins, produce fruit that will prove it!"* ^{CJB} *"Do those things that prove that you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act,"* ^{GWN} *"First go and prove by the way you live that you really have repented."* ^{LIVING} *"Live lives which shall prove your change of heart,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *and "Bear fruits that are deserving and consistent with [your] repentance [that is, conduct worthy of a heart changed, a heart abhorring sin]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

A person who has truly repented

A person who has truly repented does not continue to live as he did before.

THE AXE IS LAID UNTO THE ROOT OF THE TREES

"⁹ And now also the ax is laid | unto the root of the trees: every tree | therefore which bringeth not forth good

fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

THE AXE IS LAID TO THE ROOT

"And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees . . ."

Other versions read, *"the axe is already laid at the root of the trees,"* NASB *"Already the axe is at the root of the trees, ready to strike,"* CJB *"The ax is now ready to cut the roots of the trees"* GWN and *"The axe of his judgment is poised over you, ready to sever your roots and cut you down."* LIVING

The same statement is found in Matthew's account of the Gospel (Matt 3:10). **The point is that Divine favor was going to pass to another people.** Jesus told the people the same thing: *"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt 21:43). This transaction was going to take place in the near future. **Israel had provoked God to jealousy with her unfaithfulness, and the word He had delivered through Moses would come to pass: "They have**

moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deu 32:21). Paul also quotes this in his exposition of Israel's condition: *"But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."* (Rom 10:19-21).

Paul goes on to say that God has not cast away His people which He foreknew, and there is a remnant of Israel according to the election of grace (Rom 11:1-6). Still, the time for change had come which would be headed by the *"Savior of the world"* (1 John 4:14).

EVERY TREE THAT DOES NOT BRING

FORTH FRUIT

" . . . every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

God will not allow unfruitful trees to grow in His field. The people who do not cause glory to be brought to Him will be disinherited. Every individual tree that does not bring forth fruit will be cut down.

On the individual level Jesus said, *"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"* (John 15:6).

This is a Divine trait that must not be overlooked! We have seen it in various judgments that took place throughout Jewish history. **John now announces an epoch in which a new King, a new Covenant, and a new people will commence.** Those who desired to be part of this must repent, and bring forth confirming works – and they will not be given a lot of time to get this preparatory work done.

THE WORD TO THE PEOPLE

" 10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

WHAT SHALL WE DO THEN?

"And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? . . ."

John's message has stirred the people, being preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, they want to know what to do–i.e. **what kind of fruits can be put forth that confirm genuine repentance.**

HE SAITH UNTO THEM

" . . . He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and

Genuine unselfishness and concern for others is a manifestation of repentance, for it is not the way of the flesh to live in such a manner.

he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

True repentance involves ceasing to live for ones own self. Now the interest is turned primarily to God Himself, and secondarily to one's neighbors – just as the first and second commandments of the Law specified (Mk 12:30-31). **Genuine unselfishness and concern for others is a manifestation of repentance, for it is not the way of the flesh to live in such a manner.**

John is not declaring having two

coats was sinful. **Rather, He is affirming that when men have more than enough they are to conclude it is in order that they might have to him that has need.** Thus Paul also wrote, *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth"* (Eph 4:28).

Paul also taught that God is able to make grace so abound toward us that we can always abound to every good work: *"And God is able to make*

*all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, **may abound to every good work**: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and **multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your***

***righteousness)**" (2 Cor 9:8-10).*

Following this same line of reasoning, Paul wrote to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that

they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim 6:17-19). Self is not allowed to be prominent in the salvation of God. The preeminence must be given to the Lord. No other posture is acceptable.

THE WORD TO THE PUBLICANS

*"¹² Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? ¹³ And he said unto them, **Exact no more than that which is appointed you.**"*

The scribes and Pharisees did not ask what they should do—i.e. to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Others, however, obviously hearing what John had said, inquired concerning how they could confirm they had really repented.

THE PUBLICANS

"Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?"

Publicans were "EMPLOYED AS COLLECTORS OF THE ROMAN REVENUE" MCCLINTOK & STRONG'S

The indications are that many of them overcharged whenever they had opportunity, exploiting the people. Jesus said that the publicans loved those of their own number (Matt 5:46-47). They were also classed with "sinners" (Matt 9:10-11; 11:19; 21:31; Mk 2:15). It is also noted that Zaccheus, who was a publican, was a "rich man" (Lk 19:2).

Yet, here were some publicans who came to be baptized by John, and desired to know what they should do to show forth fruits meet for repentance.

EXACT NO MORE

*"And he said unto them, **Exact no more than that which is appointed you.**"*

Other versions read, "Collect no more than is appointed you," NKJV "collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." NRSV

Once again, John called men to a life that was not self-centered. This certainly was a fitting response to the Lord's Christ who would redeem men from self-centeredness and constrain them to yield their bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

THE WORD TO THE SOLDIERS

*"¹⁴ And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, **Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.**"*

We are being exposed to the great diversity of people who came to John: Scribes, Pharisees, the common people, publicans, and now soldiers – a fairly detailed breakdown of Jewish society.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

"And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? . . ."

Again, this had to do with bringing forth fruits meet, or appropriate, to confirm repentance.

DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN

*" . . . And he said unto them, **Do violence to no man . . .**"*

Other versions read, "do not intimidate anyone," NKJV "Do not take money from anyone by force," NASB "Do not extort money," NIV "Rob no one by violence," RSV "Do no violent acts to any man." BBE "Don't cheat or harass anyone," CEB "Oppress no one," DARBY "never use threats or blackmail to get money from anyone," GWN "No intimidation! No extortion!" NJB and "Never

demand or enforce by terrifying people or by accusing wrongfully." AMPLIFIED

I see no reason to accept the notion that John was referring to the soldiers attempting to rob or gain money from the people. To me, that is too narrow of an application. It appears that John was rather admonishing them not to treat the people roughly or unfairly under any circumstances, even though they were soldiers, and could be violent at their will.

NEITHER ACCUSE ANY MAN FALSELY

"...neither accuse any falsely . . ."

The soldiers were not to invent

charges against the people, or seek to justify malicious action by raising false accusations against them. They were to use their position for good, and not evil.

BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES

" . . . and be content with your wages."

Other versions read, *"let your payment be enough for you,"* ^{BBE} *"be satisfied with your pay,"* ^{CEB} *"Be happy with the pay you receive,"* ^{IE} and *"always be satisfied with your rations (supplies) and with your allowance (wages)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This word has led some to believe that the previous instruction referred to attempting to extort money from the citizenry to offset what they thought were insufficient wages. This is possible. I do prefer to think of it as considering others, rather than placing themselves in the place or prominence.

THE PEOPLE WERE IN EXPECTATION

" ¹⁵ And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not."

AS THE PEOPLE WERE IN EXPECTATION

"And as the people were in expectation . . ."

Other versions read, *"in a state of expectation,"* ^{NASB} *"waiting expectantly,"* ^{NIV} *"filled with expectation,"* ^{NRSV} *"the people were waiting,"* ^{BBE} *"were in a state of great expectancy,"* ^{CJB} *"all men reasoned in their hearts,"* ^{ERV} *"People's hopes were rising,"* ^{GWN} *"filled with anticipation,"* ^{NET} *"the people are looking forward,"* ^{YLT} and *"were in suspense and waiting expectantly."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

John had disrupted normalcy. They were no longer satisfied with the ordinary. Light had penetrated the realm, and thoughts had been elevated to think of the promised Messiah, and the Divine commitments that had been

made to men.

O, the blessedness of a ministry that moves men to such considerations! How damaging it is to be anchored to the mundane, and be forced to think of only of things that are temporal!

ALL MEN MUSED IN THEIR HEARTS

" . . . and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not."

Behold how the faithful Jews thought! **Until John the Baptist appeared on the scene, it had been several hundred years since any person had prophesied concerning Christ—i.e. Malachi.** Yet, the promises were now alive in the hearts and minds of the people. It had been four thousand years since the first promise was given of the Seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent. Two thousand years later God promised Abraham that through his Seed all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). The

holy prophets had spoken of a King (), a Redeemer that would be a Deliverer (Isa 59:20), a Man who would be for safety (Isa 32:1-3), and one upon whom the iniquities of men would be placed (Isa 53). After centuries of time during which nothing apparently happened, this one man – John the Baptist – had caused all of those promises to fill the minds of the people, and they had begun to expect, anticipate, watch for, look forward to, and be anxious about the Promised One. Perhaps, they mused, John himself could be the Messiah!

There is no record of anyone thinking this about Gamaliel, or any other prominent Jew. But John was a man *"sent from God"* (John 1:6), with a message from heaven. He changed the way serious people thought!

It ought to be noted that only believers can be in "expectation," which is an aspect of both faith and hope.

ONE THAT COMES AFTER ME

" ¹⁶ John answered, saying unto THEM ALL, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: ¹⁷ Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire

unquenchable."

ONE MIGHTIER THAN I COMETH

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose . . ."

John immediately takes the

spotlight off of himself, and puts it upon Christ – the sign of a true man of God. There really is no valid comparison of the One who was coming with John the Baptist. One is a King, the other a slave. John saw himself as unworthy of even serving the coming Messiah by loosening His sandals from His feet.

HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE

HOLY GHOST AND WITH FIRE

" . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire . . . "

In distinction to John, who baptized with water (Luke 3:16), the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. This would fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, *"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning"* (Isa 4:4). It would also fulfill the word of Joel, *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."* (Joel 2:28-29).

There had never been anything like this before. The Spirit had here and there come upon a few, but not for an extended time, and not after the manner John describes.

This was not said to the apostles of Christ, who were not yet chosen. So far as the record is concerned, only Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel

John told the people how things would be when the One who was after Him would come. The Savior would immediately launch the preparatory phase of the work, taking the people from where John had brought them, into the inner workings of the Lord.

were possibly there. This, this was not a word directed to spiritually elite, but rather to *"the people"* (Lk 3:10,15,18).

We are living in a time when men need to again hear of One who is greater than their peers, and a blessing and benefit that is greater than anything having its genesis with men.

HE WILL THOROUGHLY PURGE HIS FLOOR

" . . . Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."

Presently, the Lord's floor has on it wheat and chaff – but only the wheat will be kept. The Kingdom of God is like a large net in which all manner of fishes have been garnered – but only *"the*

good" will be kept (Matt 13:47). The world is like a great field in which tares and wheat are currently found –but only the wheat will be kept (Matt 13:30).

Jesus is going to thoroughly, or completely, purge His *"floor"* – the working area of the Kingdom. Not a single grain of wheat will be lost, but all of it will be gathered into His eternal garner. That is what the Savior will do. John knew it, he wanted the people to know, and we must know it also.

John told the people how things would be when the One who was after Him would come. The Savior would immediately launch the preparatory phase of the work, taking the people from where John had brought them, into the inner workings of the Lord.

A PREACHED EXHORTATION

"¹⁸ And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people."

The full details of what John preached are not neatly compiled for us – but they all pertained to the Christ. Here we are told of His *"exhortation"* – an exhortation that was ***"preached unto the people."*** Other versions read, *"many other exhortations,"* ^{NKJV} *"many other words John exhorted the people,"* ^{NIV} *"so comforting them with these and other words,"* ^{BBE} *"with many other warnings besides these,"* ^{CJB} *"With many other encouraging words,"* ^{GWN} *"many other things also, he taught and*

proclaimed," ^{MRD} *"He used many such warnings as he announced the Good News,"* ^{LIVING} *"With many other exhortations then John declared the gospel to the people,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *"with many other [various] appeals and admonitions he preached the good news (the Gospel) to the people."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

What exactly is this text saying? Fundamentally, he was preaching to the people, but what was included in the *"many other things?"* Some versions say he used *"exhortations,"* ^{NKJV} others *"comforting,"* ^{BBE} he *"used many such warnings,"* ^{LIVING} *"with many . . . appeals and admonitions,"* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"with*

many other encouraging words." ^{GWN}

As John *"preached . . . unto the people,"* declaring the kingdom of God, and announcing the coming Messiah, he mingled his words with exhortations to repent and embrace the message. Only those who had repented and been baptized could be comforted or encouraged – and that had to do with expectation more than present experience.

Proper preaching must be accompanied with exhortations to embrace and act upon the message. Preaching is more than the

dissemination of knowledge. Prophecy is defined as *“speaking unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort”* (1 Cor 14:3) – and it appears they are in that order.

There are twenty-three references

to exhortation in the epistles. This has to do with moving people to react to the message, translating that message into living. **This must not be a weak point in the body of Christ.**

The point to see here is that preaching and exhortation were joined together. Something more was being done than holding an educational seminar. A message was being delivered having moral compunction.

HEROD'S FUNDAMENTAL SIN

“¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being

multitude, because they counted

When John's ministry was completed, this is how he was moved on to be with the Lord – he was imprisoned and beheaded. Both Paul and Peter also concluded their ministries in prison, and by martyrdom

reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,²⁰ Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.”

Here Luke adds a note that does not appear to blend with the rest of the text – a word about Herod, tetrach of the region. Whether or not Herod was in the crowd, we do not know. However, John not only preached to and exhorted the people, when it was appropriate, he rebuked sin also – even in high places.

BEING REPROVED BY HIM

“But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife . . .”

Matthew and Mark report the rebuke of reference.

⇒ **MATTHEW.** *“For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, **It is not lawful for thee to have her.** And when he would have put him to death, **he feared the***

him as a prophet” (Matt 14:3-5).

⇒ **MARK.** *“For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, **It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.** Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For **Herod feared John**, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and **observed him**; and when he **heard him**, he **did many things, and heard him gladly**”* (Mark 6:17-20).

When John's ministry was completed, this is how he was moved on to be with the Lord – he was imprisoned and beheaded. Both Paul and Peter also concluded their ministries in prison, and by martyrdom (2 Tim 4:6; John 21:18-19; 2 Pet 1:14).

According to Mark's account, Herod may well have heard John multiple times – and there is no indication that John ever went into the city to preach. That being true, Herod

must have gone out to hear him in the wilderness. However, when he did, John spoke directly to him about his sin. He was living in adultery, having married his brother's wife. At the behest of his wife, Herod had John imprisoned, which event took place considerably after the occasion of this text. I gather that some of the warnings and exhortations of John, therefore, were actually addressed to Herod. What is even more, Herod *“did many things, and heard him gladly.”*

Herod was a vacillating man, moving back and forth on the moral ladder, yet he wanted to hear John, and enjoyed it. Still, he consented to the evil desires of his depraved wife, who sought, and got, the death of John.

THE EVILS WHICH HEROD HAD DONE

“ . . . and for all the evils which Herod had done . . .”

Other versions read, *“all the wicked things,”* ^{NASB} *“all the other evil things,”* ^{NIV} *“all the evil deeds,”* ^{NAB} *“all the other crimes,”* ^{NJB} and *“many other wrongs.”* ^{NLT}

The many sins of Herod are not itemized, but simply referred to as *“all the evils which Herod had done.”* The point is that John also rebuked Herod for all of these evil deeds, as well as for taking his brother's wife.

This also confirms that the Mosaic Law, while being *“the words of the covenant”* made with Israel (Ex 34:28), applied to the whole world. The Law was, and remains, *“for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for*

murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers" (1 Tim 1:9). I say that because some believe the Law has been eradicated, and that even when it was in force, was not intended for the Gentiles – and Herod was a Gentile, an Edomite.

ADDED YET THIS ABOVE ALL

" . . . added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison."

Other versions read, *"Did this most evil thing of all,"* ^{BBE} *"added still another to these by [also],"* ^{NAB} *"added a further crime to all the rest,"* ^{NJB} *"added this to crown all the rest,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *and "added this on top of it all."* ^{WILLIAMS}

From this we learn that sin accumulates, piling up indebtedness to God. Thus we read of sins that were *"many"* (Lk 7:47), *"the multitude of*

thine iniquity" (Jer 30:34), sins being *"increased"* (Jer 30:15), and *"transgressions"* that are *"many"* (Jer 5:6).

And what was the sin that was *"added"* above all? *"He shut up John in prison."* He incarcerated the servant of God. He jailed the Lord's freeman, and confined the harbinger of Jesus – and he will be judged for doing so.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/6/15. We will continue our series of lessons in the Gospel of Luke. The eleventh lesson will cover verses 21 thru 38 of chapter 3: **"THE BAPTISM AND GENEALOGY OF JESUS."** The first open revelation of Jesus occurred at His baptism. That is also the point at which His appointed ministry commenced – a prelude to the laying down of His life, and the taking up of it again. Luke also provides a genealogy of Jesus, tracing it backward to Adam, the first man. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.