

A People Prepared For The Lord

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Matt. 3:1-17

God said that He would raise a prophet who would prepare the way of the Lord.

Mal. 3:1, *“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”*

That prophet was John the Baptist.

Luke 1:76, *“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;”*

And, through his preaching he did just that.

Matt. 3:1-3, *“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. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*

What is lesser known is that John also had another purpose that went hand-in-hand with the first:

Luke 1:17, *“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

We shall see what John did that prepared God’s people for the Lord.

We shall also see how we need to be a people prepared for the Lord.

The work of John the Baptist.

First: John the Baptist would be “great in the sight of the Lord.”

Luke 1:15, *“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”*

Man sees greatness/success through the “eyes of the world”: social-economic status.

God, however, sees greatness from a spiritual perspective.

- Luke 7:24-28, *“And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings’ courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”*
- 1 Sam. 16:7, *“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”*

John’s greatness was because he would be completely separated and dedicated to the Lord, from his mother’s womb.

- Luke 1:15, *“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”*
- Luke 1:5-6, *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”*
- Luke 1:41, *“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”*
- Luke 1:67, *“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied,...”*

John's work was recorded in:

Luke 1:16-17, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

As in Elijah's day, many of the Israelites did not truly live for the Lord, but according to their own bellies.

Thus, John would come in the "spirit and power of Elijah" in turning unfaithful Israel back to the Lord.

- Mal. 4:5-6, "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*"
- Matt. 11:10-14, "*For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*"

He would bring humility back to Israel by turning the hearts of the fathers to their children.

The totality of John's work — regarding God's people — was to prepare them for the Lord.

The people needed to repent and turn their hearts to God.

Matt. 3:1-3, "*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. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*"

The people needed to see things as God saw them: spiritually.

Matt. 3:7-12, "*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 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. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 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.”

When the Lord came, He taught them from this perspective, and those who truly listened to John were ready to faithfully follow after the teachings of our Savior.

The work of evangelism today.

There are some in the religious world who teach God’s word is to be “great in the sight of the Lord.” Many people want “great sermons” that wow them to feel good about themselves.

1 Cor. 2:1-5, *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”*

Many want “giants among men” to preach to them.

Matt. 3:4, *“And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”*

What makes teachers of God great is that they separate themselves to the Lord, rather than try to appease men.

The purpose of preaching is to turn the children of God — who are unfaithful — to the Lord our God.

- There are those who do not love the Lord our God with all their heart, soul and might.
- There are those who walk secretly in sin.
- There are those who are materialistic.
- There are those who walk in hypocrisy.

The totality of teaching/preaching: prepare God's people for the Lord: Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.

2 Tim. 4:2, *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."*

Exhort God's people to faithfulness. Those who desire God will turn from sin and be encouraged in faithfulness to God: they will be prepared for the Lord.

Conclusion.

John definitely prepared the way of the Lord, but notwithstanding, God also wanted John to prepare His people for the Lord.

Are you prepared?

Faith. Heb. 11:6, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

Repentance. Acts 17:30, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"*

Confession. Rom. 10:9-10, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

Baptism.

- Mark 16:16, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*
- John 3:5, *"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*
- Acts 2:38, *"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 22:16, *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

If you are not prepared, won't you do something about it today?

