

**GOSPEL OF LUKE
IT'S TIME TO REPENT!**

LUKE 3:1-20; MATTHEW 3:1-12; MARK 1:1-8;

Introduction

Get the picture here! Approximately eighteen years have passed since **MARY** and **JOSEPH** found their twelve-year-old **SON, JESUS**, in the **TEMPLE**, involved in **HIS "FATHER'S business."** (*Luke 2:49*)

During the years after their return to **NAZARETH**, we saw last week where **LUKE** says that **JESUS** kept increasing *"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."* (*Luke 2:52*)

During this same time **LUKE** wrote in *Luke 1:80* that our **LORD'S** cousin, **JOHN THE BAPTIST**, who was the predicted forerunner of **CHRIST**, *"...grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."*

It was a very **SPIRITUALLY DARK** time in the nation of **ISRAEL'S** history when both **JOHN THE BAPTIST** and then **JESUS** appeared on the scene to begin their ministries. **LUKE** therefore began by telling us who occupied **the seats of highest authority** in the land at the time. (*Luke 3:1*)

It would take some doing to assemble a more wicked company of scoundrels: **TIBERIAS CAESAR**, the **ROMAN EMPEROR** wanted to be seen and treated as a god.

PILATE was the **ROMAN GOVERNOR** of **JUDAEA** and was both despised and feared by the **JEWS**.

HEROD (ANTIPAS), the **TETRARCH** of **GALILEE**, **HEROD THE GREAT'S** son was unbalanced, dangerous, and cruel.

PHILIP was **HEROD ANTIPAS'** half-brother and **TETRARCH** of **ITURAEA (N.E. ISRAEL)** and **TRACHONITIS (Modern day Syria)** and his dad also being **HEROD THE GREAT**.

LYSANIAS, the **TETRARCH** of **ABILENE (western slopes of MOUNT HERMON.)**

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All of these men shared one passion like most politicians of our day. **They wanted, more than anything else, to retain their power!**

Then in *Luke 3:2* we see the so-called **SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP** of **ISRAEL** at the time. Under **JEWISH LAW** there was to be only one **HIGH PRIEST**. He was to be a **GOD** appointed man from **AARON'S** family line and he held the position for life.

But, **GOD'S** way had been corrupted and the **ROMAN** government was appointing its own **RELIGIOUS LEADERS** to maintain greater control of the **JEWS**. It is believed that the **ROMAN** authorities had deposed the **JEWISH** appointed **ANNAS** and replaced him with his son-in-law **CAIAPHAS**. **ANNAS** retained his title and probably also much of the power it carried because the **JEWS** would have recognized him as their **HIGH PRIEST**.

It had been **400 years** since the last **PROPHET OF GOD** had spoken. So, it was against this backdrop of political and religious darkness that *"the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."* (*Vs 2*)

Now I want you to reflect for just a minute on the most **POWERFUL** preacher you ever heard preach, and what made him so **POWERFUL**.

We know that there are some real **POWER-PACKED** preachers mentioned in the **BIBLE**. Two of my favorites are the fiery **ELIJAH** from the **OLD TESTAMENT** and one of the great preachers of the **NEW TESTAMENT**, the **APOSTLE PAUL**.

I have been blessed to hear some **POWERFUL** preaching from some men of **GOD** in my lifetime. I remember in my days at **Tennessee Temple** hearing **Evangelist Dr. Ron Comfort** preach a revival at **Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee**. He was short in stature but he was tall in **HOLY GHOST POWER!** He was nearly blind physically, but there was nothing wrong with his spiritual vision. I could name some other fiery preachers that I have heard in my lifetime, but we'd be here all day!

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When I think of **POWERFUL PREACHING**, I think of preachers in whom it is evident that they are filled with the **POWER OF GOD!** Also, when I think of the messages they preach, they are both **UNAPOLOGETIC** and full of **SCRIPTURE!** **JOHN THE BAPTIST** was that kind of preacher!

Look at *Luke 3:3*. It says here that he was “*preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*” And **JOHN’S** cousin **JESUS CHRIST**, whom the **APOSTLE JOHN** revealed as being **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**, was also revealed by **JOHN THE BAPTIST** as being “*the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (*John 1:29*).

Now understand that as a son of a legitimate **PRIESTLY** family, **JOHN THE BAPTIST** could have served in the **TEMPLE**, dressed in the finest clothes, eaten from the best of the meat and bread sacrifices.

However, according to *Mark 1:6*, he came dressed in a *camel hair* garment, a *leather girdle* (or belt) and had a diet of *locusts and wild honey*. He confronted the nation as the first authentic **PROPHET** in over 400 years.

He came as **GOD’S MESSENGER**, with **GOD’S MESSAGE**, and declared **GOD’S JUDGMENT** on those who would not **REPENT!**

The wilderness where **JOHN THE BAPTIST** preached was a symbol of the *spiritual barrenness* that **ISRAEL** was experiencing. Spiritually speaking the nation of **ISRAEL** was living in the wilderness of unbelief. By and large, the **PRIESTHOOD** was corrupt and the **SCRIBES** and the **PHARISEES** were hypocrites. The people desperately needed to hear a voice from **GOD**. **JOHN THE BAPTIST** was chosen by **GOD** to be that voice!

Look back at *Luke 1:15-17* and see what the **ANGEL GABRIEL** said about him.

Approximately 30 years from this point, **JOHN THE BAPTIST** began to fulfill the **PREACHING** and **BAPTIZING MINISTRY** that **GOD** had called him to.

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I. THE GOSPEL BEGAN WITH GOD’S PROMISES! (*Mark 1:1-2*)

A. The LORD GOD Made A Promise To Satan!

Genesis 3:15—“*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*”

B. The LORD GOD Made A Promise To Israel!

First to **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** and then through **Moses**. *Deuteronomy 18:15*—“*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*”

C. The LORD GOD’S Promise Included The Promise Of A Forerunner! *Mark 1:2-3* refer to both...

Isaiah 40:3—“*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*”

Malachi 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.*”

Luke 3:4-6 is referring to *Isaiah 40:3-5!*

So, what was the purpose of this forerunner? To *prepare the way* for **CHRIST’S** first coming!

II. TO BE EFFECTIVE, THE TRUTH MUST BE PREACHED! (*Mark 1:4-5, 7-8; Matthew 3:1-2, 7-12; Luke 3:3, 7-18*)

And **PREACH** the **TRUTH** is what **JOHN THE BAPTIST** did! And understand that the **TRUTH** may not always be easy to hear, because the **TRUTH** demands change! (*Luke 3: 3*)

JOHN THE BAPTIST came with a message of **REPENTANCE!**

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The word's "*repent*" and "*repentance*" mean "*to turn back,*" "*change,*" and "*turn around.*" *Repentance* has two sides—
1) turning away from our sinful ways and 2) turning toward God!

Repentance is the simple act of *turning* and *is reflective of a change of heart and mind!* *Repentance* is needed to prepare the way for **JESUS** to come into one's heart and life!

A unique feature of **JOHN THE BAPTIST'S** ministry was **BAPTISM!** **BAPTISM** was nothing new to the people. The **JEWS BAPTIZED GENTILE** converts to **JUDAISM**. But **JOHN THE BAPTIST** was **BAPTIZING JEWS** and that was unusual.

What **JOHN** said to the people in so many words was "*Turn back to GOD and identify yourself with having repented by being baptized. Then your sins will be forgiven.*"

This does **NOT** mean that **BAPTISM** brings **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**. In fact, **JOHN'S BAPTISM** followed each person's **REPENTANCE** and was a sign of it. The same way that our **BAPTISM** follows our **SALVATION** and shows our **IDENTIFICATION** with **CHRIST'S DEATH, BURIAL, and RESURRECTION** for our sins!

JOHN applied the pressure on people to take an honest look at themselves and then to **CHANGE!**

The problem is that **REPENTANCE** takes **HUMBLING** of self and self doesn't like to be **HUMBLED!**

Another problem is that **REPENTANCE** causes us to have to admit the ugly **TRUTH** about ourselves and we don't like that either!

A third problem is that **REPENTANCE** causes us to have to acknowledge the error of our ways! ("*I was wrong!*")

All of this is tough because of **PRIDE** in our lives!

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But, **JOHN** was full of the **SPIRIT** and he was **PREACHING** with such effect that the multitudes that came out to hear him would visibly fall under **CONVICTION**, resulting in many **REPENTING** of their **SINS** and then asking for **JOHN'S BAPTISM**. Entering the waters of the **JORDAN** to be **BAPTIZED**, demonstrated the person's spiritual willingness to have the **MESSIAH FORGIVE** his sins.

Quoting from **ISAIAH** the prophet, **LUKE** states here that **JOHN'S** mission was to (v. 4) "*Prepare ye the way of the LORD.*" How did **JOHN PREPARE** the **WAY** for **JESUS CHRIST**?

He **PREPARED** people! How did he **PREPARE** people? He taught them about their need for **REPENTANCE!** He paved the way with **GOD'S** demands for **REPENTANCE** and the **CHANGED LIVES** that it produced!

That is **NOT** what most people want to hear, especially in our day! Most folks just want to do their **CHURCH** thing and then go about their merry way without **REPENTANCE** or **CHANGE** of any kind, except maybe a good feeling inside about themselves! They don't want their lives **TRANSFORMED** in such a way as **GENUINE REPENTANCE** must bring! It was no different in **JOHN'S** day!

Nevertheless, **JOHN** spoke the **TRUTH** to them in spite of the fact that the **TRUTH** may not always be easy to hear and may not be what folks want to hear!

Some people came to **JOHN with no intention of changing!** **JOHN** was no softy though! He spoke very sternly and plainly to those who made only a half-hearted attempt to identify with his message!

Some showed up thinking that they could just listen to a few sermons and then go through **JOHN'S BAPTISM** and then everything would be alright, but he surprised them with harsh words:
Luke 3:7 "O generation of vipers" or "you bunch of snakes."

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If **JOHN** were preaching today no doubt he would have had somebody come and tell him that he wasn't going to keep a crowd if he kept preaching like that! That's hard preaching!

He knew some these people just came to hear him out of curiosity with no intention of allowing their evil natures to be changed. Then he said in *verse 8*, "**Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.**"

JOHN destroyed their sense of false confidence. Many of the **JEWS** thought that they were destined for heaven simply because they were descendants of **ABRAHAM**. But **JOHN** blew that up! (*Luke 3:8-9*)

JOHN was not impressed with those who had a religious profession that did not produce proper fruit.

*THE GOSPEL BEGAN WITH GOD'S PROMISES!
TO BE EFFECTIVE, THE TRUTH MUST BE PREACHED!*

III. THE TRUTH HAS NOT AND DOES NOT CHANGE!

A1. JOHN Preached That JESUS Was On HIS Way, And Folks Had Better Prepare To Meet JESUS!

A2. We Preach That JESUS Is On HIS Way Back, And Folks Had Better Prepare To Meet JESUS!

Are you ready to meet **JESUS**? Have you been **BORN AGAIN**? If not, you're not ready! You'd better get ready! If you're not living for **JESUS** you're not ready either! You may be going to **HEAVEN**, but you're not ready to meet the **LORD** and stand before **HIM** if you aren't living for **HIM**!

B1. JOHN Preached That Folks Needed To REPENT And Show That Their REPENTANCE Was Real!

B2. We Preach That Folks Need To REPENT And Show Their REPENTANCE Is Real!

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GOD wants more than just a simple **profession** of **FAITH**! **HE** wants to bring forth **CHANGE** in our lives! Has **HE CHANGED** you? Have you brought forth fruit that shows you have **REPENTED** of your **SIN** and placed your **FAITH** and **TRUST IN HIM** and **HIM ALONE**?

If you say you've **REPENTED** and are **FOLLOWING JESUS**! Well show it by following **HIM** in **BELIEVER'S BAPTISM** if you haven't already! Show it in your **WORKS**! Show it in a **CHANGED LIFE**! (*Ephesians 2:10*)

C1. JOHN Preached "Behold The Lamb Of God, Which Taketh Away The Sin Of The World."

JOHN wasn't **JESUS**, but he pointed folks to **JESUS**!

C2. We Preach JESUS! ". . . Warning Every Man, And Teaching Every Man In All Wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Colossians 1:28

I'm not **JESUS**! I can't save anybody! But, I can point you to the **LAMB OF GOD** who can save you and wants to save you! Why not come today and let us point you to *the LAMB OF GOD, Which taketh away the sin of the World!*

Conclusion

The **TRUTH** is the same for everyone! Its time to **REPENT** if you are heading in the wrong direction! None are exempt! It matters not your position, your power, or your possessions.

Acts 17:30-31—"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Luke 13:1-5