

JOHN THE BAPTIST
Text: LUKE 7:24-30
(transcript: LKI (?) 5-25, 57-80)

INTRO: One of the most interesting characters in all the Bible, and one of those most highly praised by Jesus was John the Baptist. We will not have time to examine all aspects of John & his ministry, but will try to note many of the interesting details of his work.

I. HIS BIRTH. Luke 1:5-25, 57-80.

- A. Zacharias & Elizabeth were of priestly descent. Zacharias was a practicing priest.
- B. They were godly. They were childless, & apparently past the age of child-bearing.
- C. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias while he was burning incense in the temple, and told him that his prayers were soon to be answered, that Elizabeth would bear a son.
- D. The angel further indicated how God would use that son to cause many Israelites to return to God.

II. HIS MISSION.

- A. As announced by the angel. READ LUKE 1: 16-17.
- B. As foretold by the prophets.

READ ISAIAH 40:3-5

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me, and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord. (Mal. 3:1).

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great & dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, & the hearts of the children to their father, lest I come & strike the earth with a curse. (Mal. 4:5-6)

- C. As prophesied by his father Zacharias.
READ LUKE 1:76-79.

III. HIS SPHERE OF ACTIVITY.

A. In the wilderness of Judea, 25 A.D., Matt. 3:1; Luke 3:1-2

B. In Samaria, (Aenon) John 3:23

NOTE: The impact of his preaching in Samaria is probably partly responsible for Jesus' success there a few months later. READ JOHN 4:35-38.

C. In Peraea (the land beyond, east of, the Jordan, John 10:40

NOTE: Here he later encountered Herod Antipas, was imprisoned, & eventually executed.

IV. HIS MESSAGE.

A. As foretold by Isaiah. READ ISA. 40:6-8

B. The keynote of his message: Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. MT 3:2.

C. A sample of his preaching, Luke 3:7-14 (MT 3:7-10)

V. HIS BAPTISM.

A. It was preceded by confession of sin & evidence of repentance.

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, & all the region around the Jordan went out to him & were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matt. 3:5-6).

B. It was for remission of sins. Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3;

C. It later gave way to baptism "in the name of the Lord" as commanded by Jesus in the "great commission."

Acts 19:1-5

(transcript: "54 AD John had been dead more than 25 yrs.")

NOTE: Did all those who received John's baptism while it was still valid need to be re-baptized after the great commission was given?

1. We cannot know for certain, because the Bible does not say for certain.

2. The question is interesting, but not practical. What do YOU plan to do about it if they WERE rebaptized? What do YOU plan to do about it

if they were NOT?

3. No body on earth is practicing John's baptism today. Some are wearing his name, but they are not practicing his baptism.

a. John's baptism preceded faith in Christ, Acts 19:4.

b. John's baptism was upon a confession of sin. Baptist church baptism is upon a confession that one's sins have already been forgiven.

c. John's baptism was "for remission of sins." Baptist churches reject baptism that is done for that purpose.

4. My opinion. I suspect those who received John's baptism while it was valid were adequately prepared for the kingdom when it came into existence, and that they did not have to repeat what they had already done in preparation. The 12 apostles. The 120 disciples of Acts 1. The 500 brethren mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:6. Others baptized by John & his disciples & Jesus & His disciples before the great commission was given, John 3:22-23; 4:1. On the other hand, those baptized by Apollos & others AFTER the great commission went into effect were being baptized with a baptism no longer valid, and they needed to be baptism with a baptism that was valid. My main reasons for this opinion:

1. Their sins had already been remitted.

2. They were prepared for the kingdom. Compare John's preaching re Israelite descent with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, JN 3.

3. There was some sense in which people were already "pressing into the kingdom" and "entering" it or refusing to do so, Luke 16:16; Matt. 23:13.

4. The baptism of John, tho no longer valid, continued to be referred to by the apostles, A 10:37; 13:24

5. But keep in mind that this is a moot point. No one is practicing John's baptism today -- and anyone who has submitted to a baptism that is less than that commanded by Christ still needs to obey from the heart that form of doctrine, Rom. 6:17

VI. HIS DEATH.

The boldness with which John preached truth of God led him to be arrested and executed by Herod Antipas, as recorded in Matt. 14:1-12, and Mark 6:14-29

CONCLUSION: The work of John was a necessary preparation for the work of Jesus Himself. "Pentecost" (Acts 2) as we know it could never have happened except for the groundwork that had been laid by John and by Jesus in their personal ministries. Yet John lived & died without experiencing the fullness of the kingdom which he proclaimed. Scholar F.F. Bruce summarizes John's situation in these words: "While unsurpassed in personal stature, John was inferior in privilege, said Jesus, to the lowest in the kingdom of God. Like Moses viewing the Promised Land from Pisgah, John stood on the threshold of the new age as its herald, but did not enter it in this life."

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, July 30, 2000
Fairfield, PA, July 20, 2000