

The Man That Prepared Israel for the Christ

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Introduction: How can we lead men to Christ?

- A. Every Christian should *fervently desire* that others become Christians!
 - 1. As Paul was *a debtor to the Lord* so are we! **(Rom 1:14)**
 - 2. How do we accomplish this enormous task? What wisdom do we need?
- B. Some of the *greatest teaching comes by example*.
 - 1. *A pure heart teaching the pure word* is what we need. Can we tell others about “what great things the Lord has done for you.” **(Mk 5:18-19)**
 - 2. It is a great mistake when we want to “leave evangelism to the professionals.”
 - 3. Everyone who participates in this work is humbled to *daily seek the wisdom of God*. **(Col 4:3-6)**
 - 4. Let us *learn from the man God picked* to prepare Israel for the Christ!

I. John the Baptist and the audience he faced

- A. John came at a time of *extreme corruption in Israel*.
 - 1. The leadership was corrupt to the core. **(Lk 3:2; Jn 18:13, 24)**
 - 2. The openly participated in lies, slander and murder but did not want to enter the Praetorium lest they become “unclean.” **(Jn 18:28)**
 - 3. These leaders *kept a close eye on both John and Jesus*.
- B. John would *need to be strong against the solid opposition* of many.
 - 1. His work would be similar to what Ezekiel and Jeremiah faced.
 - 2. He *needed a solid foundation* for his conviction that would give him “a forehead of flint!” He knew where to stand! **(Ezk 3:7-10; Jn 6:67-68)**
 - 3. Many who could not answer him *slandered him behind his back*. **(Lk 7:33-35)**
 - 4. Consider the challenge of commanding *baptism for the remission of sins*! He had opposition! **(Mk 1:4; Jn 1:24-25; Lk 7:29-30)**
 - 5. He refused to baptize those who did not repent! They needed to *both understand the purpose of baptism and to have repented* as well! **(Mt 3:7-8)**
 - 6. This was *not an invitation for open fellowship* among the sects of the day!
- C. There were *a few in Israel* that had good hearts and needed to hear God’s word.
 - 1. How does one reach a good and honest heart? They *plainly present the words delivered by God* with conviction! **(Lk 8:15; Lk 3:2-9)**
 - 2. This kind of preaching will *immediately bring division*! This is exactly what Jesus wanted. **(Mt 10:34-36)**
 - 3. He preached the whole council of God with *the intent to bring repentance*.
 - 4. The highway leading to Jesus came from *plain, direct and personal preaching* that opened hearts to repentance.
 - 5. Isaiah prophesied about this! **(Isa 40:3-5; 35:8-10)**
 - 6. We too must follow the example of both John and Jesus! **(Mt 3:1; 4:17)**

II. The fruit of John’s teaching

- A. There were *many who diligently sought* this teaching. **(Mt 3:4-6)**

1. They did not come to John because of *his style or refined manners*.
 2. They knew enough of God's word to recognize truth. *They wanted truth!*
 3. They were not intimidated to be outside the "mainstream." Both John and his audience were similar to Elijah and his times! **(Mal 4:5-6; Lk 1:15-17)**
- B. Jesus picked His disciples amongst those *who first were followers of John*.
1. It was John who pointed his disciples to Jesus. **(Jn 1:36-37, 40-41)**
 2. These men would now see the master teacher continue *in the same delivered words* that was given to John.
- C. Jesus used the teachings and practice of John *to reveal the hearts of His hearers*.
1. Jesus would press the point, if you believed John then you will believe me. Jesus *made baptism a focal point* to reveal God's consistent authority!
 2. How the Pharisees handled the baptism of John would *show how they handled authority*. They were not after truth but instead sought to protect their position. **(Mk 11:30-33)**
 3. At the core of our teaching today must be *the seeking of truth through an understanding of authority*. **(Jn 7:16-17)**

III. The heart of John the Baptist

- A. John wanted to be *used in the service of God*.
1. He had no problem with *Jesus increasing and his influence decreasing*. **(Jn 3:29-30)**
 2. Jesus was sensitive to the nature of men who *wanted to compare them*. **(Jn 4:1-3)**
- B. He would *teach the truth to anyone*. He did not hold back.
1. The goal of God's teacher is to deliver the word as widely as possible.
 2. This eventually led to his death. **(Mk 6:17-18)**
 3. Many will not try to teach their family or friends *fearing the loss of relationship*. Many well understand that there will be losses but also that the Lord will provide. **(Mk 10:28-30)**
- C. As events humbled him he continued to *go to the Lord with his doubts!* **(Lk 7:19-20)**
1. A good teacher will *keep learning, questioning and praying*.
 2. John like the apostles *still had more to learn*. None understood that Jesus would be rejected and would die.
 3. Like Elijah, *John found answers to his doubts!* **(1 Kgs 19:10)**
 4. Jesus removes John's doubt by scripture. **(Lk 7:21-23)**
 5. Jesus refers to two OT prophecies. **(Isa 35:3-6, 61:1)**
 6. Can you see John hearing of these things and recalling the scripture and saying "That's right, He is the Messiah!" What did *Jesus say about John?*
 7. Seeking the lost *will turn our hearts inside out*. It will also cause growth in our own lives as well as help others come to know the Lord.

Conclusion: May each of us find our place in the work of leading men to the Lord!